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No. 165.

OLD HURRICANE

OR THE



Ross Grove unfolded the paper, held it to the fire and read.

DUMB SPY of the DES MOINES BY OLL COOMES

Author "Hawkeye Harry," "Boy Spy," "Ironside, the Scout," "Death Notch," etc.

CHAPTER I. THE CLAIM-STAKERS.

THERE were thirteen of them—all men in the prime of life, strong, robust and hardy-looking fellows, with rough, bearded and sunburnt faces, and eyes that shone with an honest light and the spirit of adventure. All but two were dressed in suits of brown jeans, which was, in a great measure, indicative of their nativity. The two exceptions were habited in the rude buck-skin garments so common to the hunter and trapper of the North-west.

Those in the homespun were a party of Kentuckians who had come from their southern homes, to select "claims" in the new territory, preparatory to "entering" them when the Indians' title to the land expired. Those in buck-skin were a couple of hunters in the employ of the claim-stakers, as guides and scouts.

It was a summer night in the year 1843. A campfire was burning in a dense forest bordering a large creek, in the south-west part of the then territory of Iowa, and within its light the little band of claim-stakers reclined in attitudes

of ease and repose, chatting, smoking and listening to their guides' "spin yarns" of their adventures upon the border.

A number of fine-looking rifles reined against the trunks of surrounding trees, while at one side lay a flag-pole, surveyor's compass and chain.

They were encamped upon a tract of land known as the Black-Hawk Reserve, belonging to the Sacs and Fox Indians. But in less than one year from that time, the title of the latter would expire, and the reserve be thrown open to the white man's occupancy.

Captain John Ross Grove, the leader of the claim-stakers, had, long before, conceived the idea of planting a colony in the new territory of Iowa, and having selected from his list of acquaintances such men as he knew would stand by him in times of danger and adversity, they struck out for the country of the upper Des Moines. The Black-Hawk Reserve attracted their attention, and having readily perceived its great natural advantages, they at once selected it as the land of their future home, and proceeded to locate and stake off claims, ready for pre-

emption as soon as the Indians' title was remitted in May of the following year.

They had been in the territory several days when we introduced them to the reader, and although their proceedings were in violation of the Government treaty with the celebrated chief, Black Hawk, they had obtained from the latter a private permit to select lands on certain conditions, which they endeavored to observe very strictly. But, despite all this care and precaution, they little dreamed of the dangers gathering around them.

Captain Ross Grove, the leader of the party, was about twenty-five years of age. He was a man of fine accomplishments, brave and handsome. A few days prior to his departure from home, he had wedded one of the fairest daughters of the land, and it was with a joyous heart he received the fond parting kiss of his young bride, and struck out to find them a home in the great West. And thoughts of his wife—of her waiting and watching for his return—proved a keen spur to all acts and movements.

Nat Taylor, or Noisy Nat, as he was usually called on account of his inborn jocularity, was the eldest of the two hunters, being about five and forty years of age.

Wild Dick, as the other guide was called, was not over thirty years of age, and in form was small, but strong and wiry. He had attained the sobriquet of Wild Dick from the wild, startled expression always in his large blue eyes, and a nervous quickness in his movements not unlike that common to wild animals. Born and bred on the frontier, he had been schooled amid its wildest scenes and dangers; hence, he had imbibed much of the characteristic wildness of the woods and prairies.

As the hours wore away, the campfire became neglected in the all-absorbing stories of the two hunters, and at last the party found themselves in almost total darkness. However, it was replenished, and as its light reached out further and further into the gloom, it revealed to the eyes of the party an object hitherto unobserved.

"By snakes, it's a hornet's nest!" exclaimed Noisy Nat.

"So it is," replied Harry Dudley, the surveyor; "hadn't it better be removed? Its inhabitants might disturb our repose."

"No, Mr. Surveyor," replied Nat, "if we'll let the hornets alone, they'll not pester us. I have a natural love for the little critters. Why, boys, you wouldn't believe me if I war to tell ye that such an insignificant thing as a nest o' hornets saved my skulp from a pack o' red-skins, onc't."

"Humph! that's nothin'," ejaculated Wild Dick; "I saved a dozen or more lives onc't jist by crookin' my fingers a few times, and so I'll tell ye 'bout it. You see I had a brother—a twin-brother, too, and we looked so much alike that I could hardly tell which was t'other. Eyes, hair, forms and features war jist alike."

"See here, Dick," interrupted Old Nat, "if you war so much alike, how do you know which one you are?"

"I'll tell you how. My brother Seth war deaf and dumb, but he warn't no fool, I can tell you. He learnt the mutes' alphabet—that is, he learnt to talk with his fingers. I learnt too, and so we could talk with our fingers jist as fast as you and me can with our tongues, and that's sayin' a good deal. We war both hivin' away up north, in a little shanty, and war engaged in huntin' and trappin'; for I'd have you know Seth war a tip-top hunter. One day I left Seth and went out into the woods to look arter a bar-trap, and what should I do but run

into the clutches of about a hundred Ingins, on the war-path. They threatened to kill me, and scalp and play 'thunder in general unless I'd guide them, by the nearest known route, to a certain fort which they wanted to destroy. You see they belonged a long ways to the south and weren't acquainted with the country. A thought struck me. I told 'em I'd show 'em the way if they'd let me go to my cabin fust. They refused, so I concluded to die rather than betray my friends at the fort. When the reds seed I war in earnest 'bout dyin', they concluded to let me go to the cabin, but they war to go along, and threatened me with instant death if I spoke to any one at the cabin. I promised 'em I wouldn't, and fur fear of an accident, and to help cover my intentions, I had 'em put a piece of a blanket over my mouth, and then off we marched to the cabin. Brother Seth met us at the door. The Ingins paid no attention to him when they seed he couldn't speak, for they supposed he war demented, and you all know how a red-skin regards a crazy person. My escort didn't understand finger-talk, so while I was busy 'bout the cabin, gettin' my gun and knife and sich things, I kep' up an animated conversation with brother, and never once did the reds suspect what war up. I told him the pickle I war in, and what I had promised to do to save my life. So as soon as I had set off with the Ingins for the fort, Seth leant out too. He took a roundabout way, and beat my Ingins thar more'n two hours. Wal, to make a long story short, when them reds attacked the garrison, they got gloriously licked, and not one of the soljers got a scratch. And that's how I saved the fort and several men by crookin' my fingers a few times."

"That's pretty good, Dick," said Captain Ross Grove; "but where is your brother Seth, now?"

"God only knows. I haven't seen him these five years, captain. The last I heard of him he war 'mong the Hudson Bay Fur men. He war a great pet of the'n, and the best trapper in the hull caboodle. I swar, boys—" and a tear moistened the eyes of the hunter—"I'd give a good deal to see that boy. I think I've been a leetle keersless 'bout him. He couldn't get through the world like the rest of us, and I promised my ole dying mother I'd keep a watch on witless Seth, as he war always called, tho' he weren't witless by a long shot, I can tell ye. Poor Seth! Jist as soon as I git through with you fellers I'm goin' to see 'bout him, if Scarlet Death don't put a pink spot on my temple."

"Then you fear that reputed demon?" said Captain Ross Grove.

"Why shouldn't we all fear him? He deals death to both white and red."

"Then you really believe that there is such a creature as Scarlet Death, the Demon of the Des Moines?"

"Believe it? Why, Cap, I know it! Hav'n't I seed'd lots of his victims, and his hoof-prints on the earth?"

"That's so, Cap," added Noisy Nat; "I've witnessed the same myself."

"But never seen the Demon itself?"

"No, nor no one else. He's invisible. But thar's no gettin' round thar being such a critter, for he makes a good many burryings for the folks over on the 'Dispute' and the Ingins."

"Well," said Ross Grove, "if this country is infested with devils, it will not be a healthy place for a colony."

"Wal, thar's one demon sure, and he's tuff on the population," said Wild Dick. "We'll be apt to see his hoofprints before long, mebbe."

"Then he is cloven-footed, eh?"

"Yes, makes a track like an ox; but thar's only two tracks, else I'd think an ox, or suthin' of the kind, made the tracks. Ugh! It makes the chills creep over me."

"And why is the monster called Scarlet Death?"

"Because a small, round scarlet spot on the temple, jist afore the ear, is the only mark he leaves upon a victim. He never breaks the skin or draws blood, but seems to strike with the deadly swiftness of the lightning's flash. What he strikes with, no one knows, but I do know—"

Further speech was here interrupted by the sound of approaching footsteps. The next instant a stranger made his appearance within the radius of light from the gloom of the woods. He was a tall, villainous-looking fellow, with black, snakey eyes, a low, sullen brow, and rough, sensual face. He was dressed in the garb of an Indian, and the unceremonious manner in which he stalked into camp, convinced our friends that he was there with no friendly intentions.

"Good-evening, stranger," said Captain Ross Grove, in his free, cordial manner, rising to his feet, and advancing to meet the man.

"Well, good-evenin'," returned the latter; "but, then, you needn't stare a feller out of countenance. I'm sure I'm not sich an object of curiosity."

"Hope you'll excuse our want of manners," said Ross Grove, in a tone slightly tainted with sarcasm, "but whom have I the honor of addressing?"

"M. Jules Devreaux. I am business-agent of the Sacs and Fox Indians, and hold my appointment from the United States Government."

"Indeed! Glad to meet you, M. Jules Devreaux."

"Perhaps, when you learn my business here, you will have reason to change your mind."

"I hope your business is not of an unpleasant character. However, we are prepared to listen to whatever you may have to say," said Ross Grove.

"Well, sir," began the arrogant Frenchman, "I presume you are aware of your being trespassers on the Black-Hawk Reserve?"

"I know no such thing," replied Ross Grove; "we are here by permit."

"By permit of whom?"

"One that has authority," replied the captain, "and we are taking no liberties that will conflict with the conditions of that permit."

"But they will with the treaty of your Government. This land belongs to the Sacs and Fox Indians, and for days have you been chaining it, and setting up landmarks, without the permission of the rightful owners."

"The Indians have expressed no desire for us to leave, and we are only selecting sites for homes which we propose to build up when the Indians' title to these lands expires."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Devreaux, sarcastically; "you're a progressive set, to take time thus by the forelock, at the risk of losing your scalps. It's quite a year yet until the Indians' title to these lands expires, and when it does, we propose to renew our claim. Therefore, begone at once!"

"Your insolence, sir," said Ross Grove, growing somewhat indignant at the man's insulting language, "is equal to your want of good sense, and—"

"Thar expresses it, Cap," chimed in Noisy Nat.

"If you wish to transact any business with us," continued Ross Grove, "you will do so in

language becoming, a man, or leave our camp at once."

A low, defiant laugh escaped the villain's lips.

"Impudent, sir, you are," he said to Ross-grove. "Your hair may ornament an Indian's lodge before morning, if your courage is equal to your display of impudence. Just think of it, gentlemen—if you are worthy of being called gentlemen—just think of it; one blast on that"—producing a small silver whistle—"would bring a hundred Indians down upon you in a minute."

"The nation you say!" exclaimed Noisy Nat; "then, just for the Lord's sake, give us a blast, and let 'em come, lickety-split. I'm decomposed fur a fight with the red-skins. Gorry Ahn'ty, I could lick fifty o' 'em myself, and Wild Dick here could polish the rest, to say nothin' 'bout the captain and his men. Yas, whistle 'em in, Mister Devilrow, or gimme the tool, ye pizen sap-head, and I'll blow it till she busts."

"Never mind, Rattle-tongue, you may be glad to swallow your words before daylight," said M. Jules; then, turning to Ross-grove, he continued: "Now, sir, I desire to know whether you intend to leave this reserve, or not?"

"Yes, whenever we get ready," was Ross-grove's reply.

"That's the talk, Cap," added Wild Dick, and his words were repeated by every man.

"That is your decision, then?" said Devreaux.

"It is."

"Then your blood be upon your own heads," said the villain, lifting the whistle to his lips. But the blast that was intended to call a hundred savages down upon the little band of whites was never given, for at this instant a low cry escaped Devreaux's lips, and he sunk a quivering mass to the ground, stricken down by an unseen hand!

A cry of surprise burst from the claim-stakers' lips. They were completely dumb-founded, and stood as though rooted to the spot, and gazed with distended eyes upon the prostrate form of the man. Not one of their party had raised a hand against him, and yet he had been stricken down.

From whence had come the sudden, mysterious blow?

Noisy Nat advanced and bent over the prostrate form.

"Ay, boys," he exclaimed, in a husky tone, "I see now what done the work. Look thar!"

He turned the body over, exposing the left side of the face to the light. Just before the ear all eyes saw a deep, scarlet dent in the temple. The skin was not broken, nor was a drop of blood visible. But M. Jules Devreaux was stone-dead!

"By St. Peter!" exclaimed Wild Dick, "I understand it now. Scarlet Death, the Demon, has spotted the villain!"

"Yes, boys," added old Nat, "Scarlet Death is about, and God only knows which o' us will get a spot next."

The claim-stakers shuddered. The hunters' stories of this unknown destroyer had been confirmed by startling, horrifying proof; and in less than ten minutes more they had broken camp and were moving through the forest, down the creek, in search of more congenial quarters.

CHAPTER II. THE "DISPUTE."

A few miles south of the scene of the events just narrated was a strip of country included in and forming a part of the Territory of Iowa, which the State of Missouri claimed as being embraced within the boundaries defined by her constitution, and over which that State, for a long time, endeavored to exercise jurisdiction, while the Territory, to which it rightfully belonged, disputed their authority. From these conflicts, this strip of country became known as the "Dispute."

Owing to its natural advantages and remoteness from seats of justice, the Dispute had become one of the most central posts for outlaws, river pirates and robbers west of the Mississippi. As early as the beginning of the nineteenth century a number of French voyageurs had erected a trading-post at the confluence of the Des Moines river. This attracted others to the place, and the population gradually increased, though it was a class of men, and their descendants, who had in turn been under the jurisdiction and government of various war-chiefs of the savages, of Louis XV. of France, Charles III. of Spain, Napoleon I. of France, the Territorial Government of Louisiana, Orleans, Missouri and Wisconsin, and, at times, subjects of two governments at once, and the consequence was, they were the least governed of any people on earth, and carried on their robbery and river piracy with impunity several years after the date of our story.

It is true there were a few honest "squatters" on the Dispute, but, being in the minority, they were compelled to live up to the "Club Laws," a series of enactments of the "Disputers" for the government of their settlement.

It was with deep regret that these robbers and outlaws looked forward to the day when the title of the Indians to the land north of them would expire. The savages had been very sociable neighbors, after lending a strong hand in their work of plunder and pillage. Then it had become so handy for the outlaws to attach all blame to the Indians, that it seemed totally impossible to carry on their work after the Indians had left; for white settlers, they knew, would flock in upon the reserve, and environ the Dispute, so that retreat to other quarters would be the only expedient. However, the Disputers, as they were called, had one present and fearful enemy to contend with. This was Scarlet Death, the Demon of the Des Moines.

On the afternoon of the same day on which our story opens, a number of the Dispute outlaws were congregated in a log-building in a little village called Spain.

They were a rough, villainous-looking set of men, of various nationalities, though the American and Indian half-breeds formed a good portion of the party.

"Men," said one of the party, who seemed to be a leading spirit, "the subject before us is one of no little magnitude. In less than a year from now the Indians' title to the land north of us ends. Then what will be the result? Settlers will flock in and crowd us out until it will not be safe for our business. But, we must not let them. We must stick to the Dispute, despite the vengeance of Scarlet Death or that thing called justice. The Demon we may manage to slay."

"Yas, if he don't kill us," spoke in a comrade. "You see, Lieutenant Thoms, Scarlet Death has warped it to a dozen o' our men already."

"I know it, Fuller, I know it," replied Cale Thoms, the second in command of the outlaws; "but, if we'll use proper caution, we may destroy the Demon, be he man or devil. The settlers we can keep away."

"Then we must begin in time," said a low-browed German.

"That's it, Dalberg," said Thoms; "if we don't let them get a foothold, we can control things awhile longer at least. If we intend to

do this—keep the settlers off—we've work on hand this minute."

"The furies you say! What do you mean, lieutenant?"

"Just what I say. To be more explicit, there are about a dozen men a short ways north of here locating claims, and have been for three days."

"Fire and furies! what right have they on the Black-Hawk lands a'reddy?"

"None; but they're locating claims to be entered just as soon as the Indians' title expires, and I tell you, boys, it must be prevented."

"That's the talk, lieutenant, but how'll we go 'bout it?"

"Well, in the first place, we could induce the Indians to make complaint to the government officers, who would send dragoons to drive the claim-locators off, as they did Homlin and his crew, about a year ago. Then, again, we might stir up the Indians and get them after the trespassers, and, if they refuse, we can take them in hand ourselves, and work it so as to throw the blame all onto the red-skins."

"Boys," suddenly exclaimed a villainous-looking Spanish Creole, "do any of you know who the leader of them claim-locators is?"

"No, no," was the general response.

"How do you know it?"

"Caranda! I know it by the evidence of my own eyes—it is Captain John Ross-grove, of Columbus, Kentucky."

A cry of surprise burst from every lip, for John Ross-grove was well known to them, having visited the Dispute once, with a company of dragoons, in search of a band of horse-thieves that he had tracked in that direction. The Disputers were the real horse-thieves, but they put on such an innocent face during Captain Ross-grove's stay, that he was completely outwitted and put upon the wrong trail.

"Then, by Jehosephat," said Thoms, "our captain, Reckless Ralph, will accomplish his mission, perhaps, without much trouble. As it's about time the captain was back, I wonder if we couldn't scare Ross-grove home? I believe I will send a note to him in the care of the Mute Spy, and try it. But, see here. Wouldn't it be best to send a man to the Indian village to stir up the red-skins, also, for fear the letter may fall in taking them there?"

The opinions of all in this matter coincided with that of Thoms.

"Then," said the latter, "I'll appoint Jules Devreaux for the work, and my instructions, Jules, are these. Don't be too sticking about telling the Indians an abundance o' good, healthy lies, as I know you can. Stir 'p their blood to a scolding heat, and get them 'tter the claim-locators, if possible."

"I'll do that, lieutenant, bet your life on it," replied Devreaux, who at once departed on his mission.

A few minutes later, a man on horseback dashed up to the door of the cabin—dismounted and entered the apartment where the outlaws were congregated.

"Bill Hohn, as I live!" burst from the lips of several.

"You bet, boys," roared Hohn, excitedly.

"Why, Bill!" exclaimed Thoms, "what the devil's up? Where's Reckless Ralph—Squire Ralph, or Judge Ralph Raft of the Dispute?"

"He and other boys 'll be in to-night."

"Is it possible?"

"It is, and he's got what he went after. But to his surprise he found another man had a claim on it, but took it anyhow. And what do you think? We come nigh runnin' right into that first owner's hands this mornin' up on the Purchase. To make a long story short, that owner is Captain John Ross-grove, the very chap that came here once with a company o' dragoons. For fear of bein' discovered, Cap is goin' to lay hid till night, and he sent me in advance, with this note for you, Lieutenant Thoms."

Thoms took the note and read it.

"Boys," he said, when he had concluded it, "the captain wants us to run those claim-stakers out of the country at once. He is afraid they'll get wind of what he has got in his possession."

"Sacre! when does he wish for us to strike ze blow?"

"Soon as possible after nightfall. He says the locators have been chaining off claims along Chequest Creek to-day, and will probably camp in the vicinity of the old Indian ford to-night."

"By gar, if he be one grand fun drivin' ze locators off," exclaimed a little villainous Frenchman.

"Yes, but we'll have to be careful," said Thoms, "for fear the claim-locators get wind of our movements. We will all go to our respective homes when we adjourn, then soon after dark, gather one by one on the north side of Beaver Lake. From that point we will shape our course, as I propose to send the Mute at once to the claim-stakers' camp, to ascertain their real force, and their means and advantages of defense. Therefore I proclaim this meeting adjourned until dark."

The meeting broke up.

CHAPTER III. WITLESS SETH.

SHORTLY after the claim-locators broke camp the moon came up, and as they proceeded along the sandy shore of Chequest Creek toward the Des Moines, a cry from the lips of Noisy Nat brought them all to a stand.

"What now, Nat?" asked Captain Ross-grove.

"Look thar!"

He pointed down at the sandy beach that lay sparkling before them in the bright moonlight. Every eye was at once bent in the direction indicated, and saw a long, slender hoof-mark deeply imprinted in the white, yielding sand.

"The Demon's tracks, by the holy mysteries!" exclaimed Wild Dick.

"And that is the track of Scarlet Death," said Captain Ross-grove.

"Yes, Cap, that's the critter's track. You see he's been goin' up the Chequest. Ugh! his very tracks make me shiver."

"This Demon is a creature I'd like to see," said young Dudley, the surveyor.

"Eh! and get a pink on yer temple?" asked Noisy Nat.

"No, I have no desire to meet the fate of M. Jules Devreaux. But, what kind of a weapon do you suppose he uses to strike with?"

"The devil only knows; however, I think he strikes with his breath like the blow-spike, and that, too, as hard as chain-lightning. But, boys, let's hoof it on down to the river and then go into camp again, Demon or no Demon."

Acting upon this suggestion, the party moved on and soon came to the Des Moines. Turning, they proceeded a short way down its course, when they again came to a halt for the night. Selecting a favorable spot a few rods back from the river, they went into camp. A fire was lighted in the center of a dense clump of small trees, where the foliage above and around would prevent the light from shooting athwart the darkness and publishing abroad their new location.

It now became necessary to station a guard over the camp, and the responsibility of this duty first fell upon Wild Dick, who at once

took his post in the woods a few rods west of camp.

The claim-locators now threw themselves on their blankets before the fire, further than to touch his ear and lips. But this was sufficient. It told them he was deaf and dumb. This brought vividly to their minds the story that Wild Dick had told them that night of his brother, Witless Seth; and, although they had never seen the latter, they were satisfied that he stood before them, for the family resemblance was remarkably striking.

The mute stood before them, gazing from one to the other, as though he were searching each face for a familiar countenance; but, seeing all were strangers, he raised his hand and began moving his fingers in a peculiar manner. He was trying to communicate with the party, but none of them being acquainted with the mutes' language, Captain Ross-grove signified the fact to him by a shake of the head.

"Call in Wild Dick," Ross-grove then said, to Noisy Nat, "for I am satisfied, from the great resemblance, that this man is his mute brother, Seth."

Noisy Nat at once relieved Wild Dick, who soon made his appearance in camp; and no sooner did his eyes meet those of the mute stranger than they lit up with a light of recognition, and the next moment the brothers greeted each other in an embrace that told of their great joy and brotherly love.

"Lordy, boys!" Wild Dick at length exclaimed, "this, captain and friends, is brother Seth, the identical twin-brother of whom I told you to-night. He's deaf and dumb, but he's no fool, I tell you."

Each of the claim-locators advanced and shook the hand of the mute, who acknowledged their greeting with a low bow.

The brothers then entered into a conversation which was carried on altogether with their fingers. It lasted for fully an hour. They were comparing notes since they last parted, years before. The claim-stakers were spectators, not auditors, of the silent conversation. At times they would see a smile of joy pass over Dick's face, then his brow would grow moody and his eyes would flash with a vindictive fire; then again his features would relax into an expression of surprise and astonishment. Suddenly his pent-up emotions found expression in the startled exclamation:

"Good God, is it possible?—who'd a thought—"

The words were uttered involuntarily, and having checked himself before he had fully expressed his emotions, he glanced quickly at Captain Ross-grove, then continued his conversation with his brother. At length, however, he turned to the captain and said:

"I swear, Cap, I've learnt a heap to-night."

Brother Seth has told me some swiss'n big secrets. A part of them, howsumever, I'm not at liberty to tell, just yet, and part of them I am. One of them this 'ere is, eminey danger. Before mornin' we're to be attacked by a party o'—"

"Dragoons?" interrupted Ross-grove.

"No; a band of robbers, rascals and cut-throats. Seth says the settlers on the strip of country south of us, called the Dispute, is nothing but a nest of robbers, river-pirates, and counterfeiters."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Ross-grove. "A short time ago when I was through this country, with a company of soldiers, in search of a band of horse-thieves, we stopped at the Dispute, and for a frontier settlement, I considered it remarkably orderly."

"Ay, Cap, that was only an external show. Seth says they're a hard set, and it's them that's sworn to kill every man of us afore mornin'."

"They're goin' to attack us just as, soon as Seth goes back."

"Then your brother is one of them, eh?" said young Dudley.

"Wal, now, Harry, you've come to the stickin' point at the Dispute, and is here as a spy on our movements, but he will prove to you that he is our friend."

"Well, really, this is surprising news, and will likely prove a detriment to our calculations. However, if Seth's story is true—and there is not a doubt but it is—the Dispute may be the rendezvous of the horse-thieves, river-pirates, and counterfeiters, that have so long baffled the most strenuous efforts of the officers of justice. If so, we might maneuver around and get hold of the ring-leaders, for whom there is a handsome reward offered."

"That's the right chorus, Cap," exclaimed old Nat. "I wouldn't mind turnin' an honest pig by raisin' the ha'r o' a hoss-thief."

"What does your brother propose doing, Dick?" questioned Ross-grove.

"Stay right here, and let me go back in his place. Won't I tell 'em some big 'uns, tho'?"

"They'll mistrust your intentions, and probably shoot you," said one of the party.

"Not much, Hayworth; I propose to pass myself off as Seth, the Mute."

"Capital idea, Dick," said the captain. "Were your mother living, I am sure she could not tell which was which, so far as forms and features are concerned; but that tongue of yours would betray you."

"Nary time, Cap; I'd carry a good-sized pebble in my mouth to keep my tongue still, don't you see?"

"But you'd have other obstacles to meet. Your ignorance of the place and people would betray you."

"Not much, Molly Ann. I'd have Seth post me afore I left. The reason I'm so anxious to get among 'em is this yer: Seth says thar's undarthin' 'mong the crew that he can't understand. It's sumthin' that's creatin' great excitement 'mong the villains, but they never give him a hint of what it is. You see he can't hear, and thar's only three in the clique that can talk the mutes' language, and one of these is the captain of the crew, and another one his darter. And now, boys, I'm goin' to find out what the great move is 'mong them robbers and pirates."

"Well," said Ross-grove, "I admit I am anxious to know myself, but I do not want you, Dick, to place your life in jeopardy."

The brothers now entered into another conversation, which lasted full an hour; then they retired a short distance from camp and exchanged clothing, and Wild Dick became Witless Seth, the dumb spy. The claim-locators felt certain his disguise would not be penetrated, unless it was through some inadvertency so peculiar to his reckless nature. In a few moments he took his departure for the Dispute, Witless Seth remaining with our friends.

The claim-stakers again threw themselves upon the ground in various positions of ease and repose. All became silent and thoughtful, and at length the gentle influence of slumber began to steal over them. Their conversation gradually ceased; their minds became heavy

and drowsy, and at length, all but the mute were wrapt in slumber.

Several minutes had passed thus, when Captain Ross-grove was aroused by a light touch upon his arm.

Rising to a sitting posture, he saw the mute bending over him, holding a small bit of paper in his hand, which he at once placed in his.

Ross-grove unfolded the paper, and saw it was written over in a good hand-writing. He held it to the light and read:

"John Ross-grove, your presence is required at home, 'less your affections in your young wife will be supplanted by the eminent judge."

"A FRIEND."

The paper dropped from the captain's hand. The color receded from his face, and he gasped hard for breath. Had a dagger been thrust to his heart, he could not have manifested more violent emotions.

"It's a lie!" he at length fairly hissed between his hard-set teeth; "it's an infamous lie. Oh, if this man could speak—could tell me from whence this letter came! But then, all the powers on earth could not make me believe my wife, my darling Camilla, is false to me. No, no; this note is an imposition—perhaps a trick of some friend who is in the neighborhood, and knows that I am here. It must be so, for no truer heart ever throbbled in woman's breast than Camilla's."

Thus musing, he picked up the paper and put it in his pocket. Then he lay down again. But he could not sleep. Something like a horrible dream had engrossed his mind, with something terrible to come. What it was, of course he could not tell. He tried to shake off the spell, but in vain—it grew upon him. At length he arose to his feet, and drawing his blanket around him, walked out toward the river. He wanted to be moving—doing something that would drive that fearful fantasy from his mind.

On the bank of the river, under some drooping foliage, he stopped. The moonlight stream lay gleaming before him like a bed of molten silver, while along either shore hung a black, somber fringe of shadows.

A solitary cricket was piping in an old log, hard by, and a bull-frog croaked on the margin of the stream.

From a breast-pocket Captain Ross-grove drew a small picture-frame, or case, which he opened and held where the moonbeams would show him the fair face set therein—the face of his young wife, Camilla.

"False, false!" he mused; "God in heaven forbid! Camilla, my darling wife, I know it is a falsehood, and why should I let the letter trouble me? One would think I suspected you, my angel Camilla. But never! Oh, if I could only look upon your living face this moment! Perhaps, if so, I would see those dark brown eyes closed in slumber—dreaming—dreaming—of—of your own John Ross-grove, while smiles play about those fair, sweet lips, which, perchance, may whisper my name. But all these are pleasant, but hopeless thoughts. Hundreds of miles separate us to-night, Camilla, and may for many more, but then—"

He did not conclude the sentence, for, just then, the silence that fell around him seemed to paralyze both body and mind. The cricket in the log and the frog on the margin of the river became hushed as if by magic. A silence reigned so intense that it seemed as though the spot had never been called from chaos; but this silence was soon broken. A faint sound rustled suddenly athwart the night. It was the dip of oars. A boat was descending the river. It would pass before the captain. He bends his head and listens. The low murmur of voices comes to his ears, mingled with the splash, splash of oars. He can hear the waves chafing the shore. He can see them circling outward in advance of the descending boat, and at length he sees the craft glide within the partially-obscured range of vision. It is a long bateau, and contains several men.

Ross-grove drew nearer the edge of the water—still keeping within the dense shadows—that he might be enabled to see who the voyagers were.

The boat comes on, its sharp prow cleaving the silvery waters.

He can count six men in the craft. Five are engaged at as many pairs of oars, while the sixth one is supporting a burden on his arms and breast.

As the boat comes still nearer, the captain recognizes the man with the burden. It is Ralph Raft, the leading citizen of the Dispute, but Ross-grove little dreams that he is Reckless Ralph, the notorious outlaw chief.

Something drew the captain's attention to the burden Raft held in his arms. He saw it was a human form—the form of a woman. He could see her head resting on his breast, while her white, white face, upon which the moonbeams fell, was upturned to his dark, bearded visage.

"Ah," thought Ross-grove, "she is his wife or sweetheart. How fondly she gazes up into his face, and how tenderly he supports her! All is heaven to them now."

A strange fancy holds the captain's eyes upon the woman's face. The boat draws nearer. It is opposite him. He starts and clutches at a limb for support. A groan escapes his lips—a groan that seems to come from a bleeding heart. But the sound is drowned in the splash of oars, and the long bateau glides on. Then he staggers, and falls heavily to the earth.

He had recognized the face of that woman pilloved on the outlaw's breast. It was the face of his own wife—his own Camilla Ross-grove!

(To be continued.)

Coral and Ruby: OR, THE RETRIBUTION OF A LIFE-TIME.

BY MRS. JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.
AUTHOR OF "ADRIA, THE ADORPT," "STRANGE WED," "CICELY'S DECEIT," "THE FALLEN WIDOW," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VIII. INCLUDES THE RECEPTION.

"You are quite right, Mrs. Andrews. At least I should have needed no prompting in recognizing Mrs. Stuyvesant. She looks as though time had been standing still for her while I have felt myself growing gray."

That was what his tongue said as he bowed before this lost love of his early manhood, with his cool, critical gaze on the small, thin, still face, which had lost its old charm of bright beauty, which was smooth and fair but woefully pathetic, with its dark eyes and shadows underneath, with the sharp outlining of the delicate features, but his heart was telling him a different story.

"The years have not told on her as I have been imagining," he was thinking to himself. "But, then, at thirty-six one isn't expected to have lost all the grace and fairness which is in its earliest bloom at eighteen. She hasn't changed so much in look, but it doesn't require Argus eyes to see that the stories people whisper are not without foundation; it is not difficult

to comprehend that she has not found a great deal of happiness in her chosen lot. I wonder if she has been haunted by a ghost of 'love lost' all this time? Not probable, though. Women's hearts are tender things, rather impressionable, but after the fashion of the sand on the shore, the tide washes out the marks and leaves them none the worse for wear. Ah, Helene! 'it might have been'—and I think life might have been brighter for you had you chosen after your own heart's prompting—sacrificed 'all for love and the world well lost.' Ah, well! the dream has flown, and who knows what long-deferred sweetness of recompense may be in store for me?"

Helene turned her weary face, lighting a little, as she rarely did now, with a faint smile, and giving her hand with the old grace, which he remembered well.

"Mr. Tracy, it certainly is a pleasure to meet you again. You can not complain of the way time has used you, if we are permitted to judge by outward appearance. And you have been in the city for weeks, I have been informed. It is really quite unkind to slight old acquaintanceships as you have done—new ones, too, for all that. Mr. Stuart has reported you as very studious and secluded, but, now that you have broken bonds, it is to be hoped Stuyvesant House may be occasionally favored with your presence. Coral has spoken of you, and Miss Harland. She is with us, I presume you know."

"She told me such was the intention on the eve of leaving her ancestral domain up in the vicinity of my own place among the Alleghenies. A capital place for burying one's self, Mrs. Stuyvesant; I wouldn't ask a better. Hereafter, when I have tired of the society of my fellow-men, I shall make an orderly retreat to Tracy Hall rather than rush away to Central America, mid-Africa, or any other such barbarian solitude. I think I shall pass a peaceful old age yet under the shade of my own vine and fig-tree."

"There is no reason why you should not, unless your past adventurous life is too alluring after the novelty of quietude passes away. A lone man and lonely, you will scarcely content yourself. It is indispensable that a man should marry and possess himself of the ties of home affections to invest his own 'vine and fig-tree' with peculiar and enduring attractions."

"That is only an epitome of the general advice I receive. Coming from authentic and experienced sources—our jovial Mrs. Andrews, for instance—it carries due weight with it. I may even be induced to consider the matter if—oh, well—if I can succeed in stirring up some lost enthusiasm on the subject. My thoughts of love and matrimony are so far obscured in shadow that they come in very strange and unedifying shapes to my mind. Apropos of that, I have not seen Mr. Stuyvesant—is he here this evening?"

"He seldom—I may say never—takes part in these gayeties. Our lives follow totally diverse ways. I think I caught sight of Coral out there, Mr. Tracy. Will you relieve me from the fatigue of making my way through these crowded rooms to caution her? She has been dancing, and is exposing herself now to the inevitable result of a cold standing in the draught of that open doorway."

"Young heads are not altogether thoughtless, Mrs. Stuyvesant," he answered. "She is coming this way under Stuart's escort."

He kept his place by her side, chatting easily, probing those depths of feeling that had been as sealed chambers for these eighteen years. He had lived down the best and the worst of that passion of old, but there was a little thrill of sad regret and a little rising of resentment scarcely directed against her so much as the world at large, whose teachings had guided her course then—and, perhaps, also a rather ungenerous desire to test her degree of remembrance.

But Helene was passive. Her still face betrayed no varying phases to indicate that she recalled the sweet dream of her youth, or connected this bronzed and bearded traveler man with any close interest, past or present, of her own.

"I came to see if you were pining all alone, mamma," Coral's voice spoke, at their side. "Mr. Tracy, at last! I began to think it was all a canard—the rumor that you were to personally enlighten the world at large, and Richmond society in particular, with all the knowledge people say you have gathered up. I supposed you had repented and had gone back to Tracy Hall and mountain seclusion."

"My serene, my serene," he thoroughly shaken by a thrillingly adventurous incident which nearly occurred there some time since. When Dolph spoke of leaving, I couldn't face the risk alone of having belated night passengers breaking their necks down the gullies in sight of my inhospitable walls—I think how embarrassing the situation should I be called upon to play the part of sick-nurse and surgeon, especially if a young lady were interested in the case. The prospect was too disheartening. I unloosed my fishing-rod—quite true for that any way—stuffed a portmanteau, packed my meerschaum, dismissed my housekeeper, and—prologue to a society life begins."

"I think you need scarcely have feared a recurrence of that rather exciting episode—such things are apt to be rare as angels' visits if not so welcome. I certainly approve your course, if I do reserve the liberty of questioning the motive avowed. It isn't at all probable that I should invade your hospitality, if that is what you mean, Mr. Tracy. 'Enough is good as a feast,' you know, and one taste of pitchy night, dangerous road, storm, adventure and escape, quite satisfies me. The scenery was magnificent as we saw it on our return. But, if ever I attempt the mountain again of my own choosing, it shall be in dreamy summer weather, with broad day and easy stages for the ascent."

"Many proposals and God disposes!"

Standing there, flushed and fair, in the glare of the brilliant lights, happy in the prized enjoyments of the time, making laughing allusions to the discomforts following the imminent peril of that night in the mountains, which, now that it was passed, could present their ludicrous phases, Coral little imagined how soon she should be required to retrace the ascent through the bleak desolation of falling winter weather, closed about by a hard trouble and despair, which it would not seem now could threaten the wealthy lawyer's petted daughter.

"What are you discussing with mamma, Randolph?—poetry? I venture to aver that you'll not

wholly devoid of experience either—I've seen the Apache war-dance, and mazzard with Mexican girls, and swung around the circle with sea-beige Islanders, until I'm willing to brave a redowa, with Miss Stuyvesant's superior tact to cover deficiencies."

He proved he could dance very passably, however. Not with the elastic lightness of springy youth, perhaps, but in a manner which was creditable to fourteen lessons from a French master who had undertaken to drill this mature pupil into the mysteries and intricacies of the figures and steps in vogue.

"What a charming little sylph it is," thought Mr. Tracy, stooping his head toward Coral's vivacious chatter. Like mother like daughter, in more ways than one. I'm really inclined to think that I may find a recompense for the bitter disappointment of "lang syne."

Very well satisfied was Mr. Tracy at arriving at this conclusion. So we move along with the changing current. Hot-headed youth dashes and frets against the cool caution of middle age, but it is quite as willing to twist the next generation to selfish advantage without regard for the tender follies which are repeated again. "You must let me fill at least one vacant space still," he said, as he scanned her tablets. "Um—m! Dolph next, and there he comes. Which shall it be, Miss Stuyvesant—how full your card is—say the fifth after this, a waltz it is."

"To my own regret, I must refuse. The list is taken up until that, you will perceive, and I there I stop—on mamma's account solely. I could dance on till daylight and never tire, but mamma is not strong, so we leave at an early hour. We must be having you at the house soon, Mr. Tracy."

"I shall be most happy. Who wouldn't be happy with such a prospect? By-the-by—Yes, Dolph, in a second—I see Miss Harland there, which reminds me I haven't paid my respects to her yet. Incessantly after being such close neighbors, of course. Perhaps her card may have a vacant place yet."

"Ruby's?" said Coral, taking Randolph Stuart's arm. "You'll find it all vacant, most probably. Ruby doesn't dance, I believe. Try the effect of your persuasions, though, by all means, Mr. Tracy. A young lady who can dance, and won't dance, should be made to dance, I say."

She laughed over her shoulder as she moved away, and he sauntered slowly over to the spot where Ruby stood.

"Our queen doesn't dance, eh?" he soliloquized. "Oh! I thought every one danced, nowadays. I wonder if the objection—whatever it may be—is quite insuperable. I have a fancy that such statuesque repose could yield to a very pleasing grace of motion. Miss Harland, aloud, "permit me the pleasure. Graciously, I'm sure, to find you haven't quite forgotten me."

"What kind of memory do you credit me with possessing, Mr. Tracy? We forget, and we forget not—it may be convenient to make a sieve of our memories sometimes, but certainly not to the exclusion of yourself."

"Strain out our objectionable acquaintances—that might be desirable to some. I am thinking of other recreations now. Every one is crushing in the redowa—see the floor thronged! By the next they will have thinned out. Will you favor me with a turn, then?"

"I very seldom dance, Mr. Tracy."

"Is it possible?" with a well-feigned air of surprise. Clive Tracy was back in his natural element after years of absence; the little arts of flirtation came readily as if he had walked in the light of women's eyes, and breathed soft flatteries into women's ears, instead of being a brute and plain and desolate—as if he had studied the polite insinuations of the world, rather than its natural formations. "Not dance, with such music? That alone should tempt you. This once, please."

The faintest of slow smiles dawned upon her lips, and her luminous dark eyes looked calmly back into his.

"Very well then, Mr. Tracy. The measure is changing, is it not?"

A few minutes later they were circling around the dancing-hall, which, as he had predicted, was emptied of half its prospective dancers. A couple admirably adapted to each other moving with a calm disregard of the observation some directed toward them, but by no means after the manner of a few who drew laughing comment upon themselves.

"Good appearance, decidedly," drawlingly commented a bystander, staring at them hard through a glass, which was very evidently an affection; such restless, piercing, bright orbs as pertained to him are never otherwise than strong and keen. No other than Mr. Julius Wing.

"What a pity we can't have duchesses and countesses and the sort on our free Republican soil; I would make such a splendid 'my lady'—that Miss Harland. 'Pon my soul, I never saw any thing neater in the shape of the sex. There's the other one, the little Stuyvesant, who owes such an immense debt of gratitude to my humble self, she's one of your tender, loving little girls, bright enough, but can be read at a glance; but the Ruby has fire under the surface, if it is smoldering just now. The dainty darling whose gratitude I won by saving her—crinoline—in the jam the other day, seems to be very well entertained—too well, in fact. Dolph Stuart has been hanging close all the evening. I haven't really decided to make any pretensions that way myself, but it's always as well to take the best advantage of an opportunity. Have played it around the governor rather closely already—an booked for a fair share of the business he can very well afford to throw over. We petty solicitors may be glad of any thing honest in the line. Those two young ones are stopping, I believe; let it go that way and it'll be a gone case on both sides in a week's time. One thing I've invariably observed in these rapid-symptom love diseases—they're not particularly hard to cure. Now, more as a matter of principle than any personal interest, I think I'll break that *tete-a-tete*, which is certainly imminent."

The youthful couple had drawn back from the eddy of the crowd.

"Look at that," Randolph said, indicating the circle they had just left. "Tracy and Miss Harland, by all the gods! You are the one to whom honor is due in drawing him out, I believe. I'm willing to affirm after this that Circe's silken threads are more potent than the fiercest iron curb."

"One may lead where they can not drive, you know."

"And Tracy absolutely looks as though he rather enjoyed being led."

"Looks are deceitful, people say; I don't believe it. Who wouldn't enjoy it in his present position? I never saw Ruby look better, I think."

"The same remark is applicable to Miss Stuyvesant herself." It was the lawyer speaking at her side. "Dancing? That's an accomplishment I don't possess—on my sorrow. Wish I did. It must seem stupid of me not to attempt even a quadrille with you, Miss Coral?"

"Very kind not to insist on it, Mr. Wing, considering your candid avowal."

I imagined you might suppose I was slighting a sort of a claim, you know. Wouldn't think of losing my place in your good opinion for a half-dozen failures in the way of attempts. It looks easy enough."

"So it does," assented Coral, smiling, while Randolph gave him a look of cool inquiry which fell without impression upon his imperturbable self-possession. "That reminds me some one else should be claiming me now. No, not you, Mr. Stuart. Three dances in succession—that would be an open violation of rules. Ah, there comes the recreant now."

Whoever it was led her away, and the little lawyer was left standing by the side of this tall young lover Coral had gained. Watching her at a distance, Stuart lost sight of his immediate surroundings for an instant.

"Best-dressed girl in the room," Wing's voice came to him as if from afar off. "Handsome too, according to my mind."

"Yes?" half-inquiringly, half-graciously.

"Rich, of course. She must be that to make such an appearance. To twist an old saw—'wealth will tell'; she has blood as well though, and of the old blue sort to judge by her name."

"Blood?—ah, yes?"

Mr. Wing gave him a keen glance, and began to stroke an imaginary mustache.

"My dear fellow," he drawled, "are you asleep? I repeat that Miss Harland has the best of the worst blue blood of the state—that is if she's one of the Harlands. Their chief characteristics were boldness, wickedness and wealth, I believe."

"Miss Harland—ah!—she's rich, I believe. At any rate she don't seem limited on money matters. I was there the other day when she asked for and received a cheque of four figures as coolly as if it had been no more than two. It takes wealthy persons to do that, I imagine."

"All I wanted to know," mused the lawyer, as Stuart turned away.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE TOILET.

It was after dinner at the Stuyvesants. The drawing-rooms were alight, and the family gathered there; it was rather a notable incident for all to be assembled together as they chanced to be upon this evening. There were others also—Clive Tracy and Randolph Stuart and Mr. Wing. How the latter had secured his footing he best knew; but there he was quite at his ease prepared to discuss weighty matters with Mr. Stuyvesant, pay homage to his wife, or play the devoted to either of the younger ladies.

Mr. Stuyvesant had settled back in the depths of a sleepy hollow of a chair, his face in the shadow, and was supposed to be napping; but he was watching a little group gathered about the sofa where Helene was reclining—Helene, with her still, sad, wistful face and melancholy eyes, supporting her cheek upon a hand so fragile and fair that it might have been waxwork; Coral, on a hassock, trifling over a book of engravings on her lap, but giving less attention to it than to the conversation and her companions; Mr. Wing looking insignificant in one of those great easy-chairs which were abundantly scattered about, and Dolph Stuart, one elbow on his high back, his tall figure inclined in lazy fashion, talking to the mother, but his dark eyes turning persistently to read the daughter's expression.

Ruby sat at the piano away at the further end of the room, touching the keys softly with one shapely hand, while she talked with Clive Tracy at her side.

This town-house of the Stuyvesants was fitted with all the disregard of expense which long purses can command, and these drawing-rooms were models of luxury and refinement of taste. There were three rooms, each rated by arches and draped with draperies of silken and velvet. The whole three rooms had presented a brilliant vista as the party came in from the dining-hall, but Coral had drawn the curtains at one of the arches with the laughing declaration that so small a party would quite lose themselves in such longevity of space. Shrouded in by these falling draperies, seeming like a shadow among their shadows, her thin yellow hands moving stealthily over some knitting-work which did not require the attention of the pale eyes, sat Miss Lang. Mrs. Stuyvesant's companion had not dined with the company. She had come riding in afterward, as was her custom, so silently as to have been scarcely observed by one, and ensconced herself in a nook where she was least liable to attract personal attention. It was her own choice to be at hand should she be called upon, and though so unobtrusive, those cold, fishy orbs took minute note of all which occurred within the rooms.

The first group occupied Mr. Stuyvesant's thoughts as well as his future observation.

"Little Coral, how happy she looks!" he thought. "Heaven preserve her from this wear of anxiety which grieves her so heavily. And Helene was as bright once—scarcely so vivacious, but as happy. Lord forgive me for bringing such a blight upon her. But, I loved her so—I loved her so, and I have suffered—just God!—what retribution. What a life to have led! and she has hated me since that day, the first when I really thought I was winning her surely to me. What a pride it is to have upheld her so unchangeably! And that woman whose power over us is like a threatening sword which a breath may bring down, how she has kept her vow! Every hour has held its own weight of misery, and in moments when I have been soothed by the thought that the fear of her must hasten me into my grave. My old strength is broken and weakened by it; I am not the man I should be at my age. This life of suspense is terrible, but Heaven help me if it be broken by that fear. My little Coral! my your life be held free from the taint of my wrong-doing. If harm comes to you—and it will come, for through you she can strike me the deadliest blow—if it comes—My God! the thought will madden me yet. To be so helplessly in the bonds and not dare break them! If Coral could be spared, my own wasted life would be as nothing, and there is one chance—just one. Dolph Stuart is brave and manly and worthy of her, and he is in love with her already. I can see that. He will love her in spite of all, even if he knows the truth. I am sure, and if it can be kept from her she may be spared the misery yet. If I should tell him—suppose I should? No, it is too soon yet; he has scarcely had time to know his own heart. Time enough if it proves as I hope. Perhaps Margray only means to torture me to the last; why should she care for any thing more when secrecy is her gain? But, she is vindictive and relentless, bitter to the last. Why will she not be contented with her need of revenge? Heaven knows, I have suffered enough."

His harassed, care-lined face, and hair turned prematurely gray, attested that.

Ruby at the piano struck a chord and played a soft symphony. A little silence fell on the central group as they listened.

"Exquisite little thing," murmured Dolph, approvingly, as the fair musician struck off into something else in that same minor key. "Miss Harland quite masters the art."

He had sauntered over from his position near Mr. Wing to drop on one knee, while he stooped his head over a landscape view which was probably beyond an excuse than attraction.

"If you could hear her play as I heard her once, you might well say it. It was in her home up among the mountains when I met her first. She swore that the instrument there had been long in disuse, but it must have been

of some superior make, I think. At any rate, though Ruby plays well always, there's something lacking which was complete there—some difference in her touch it would seem, and the impression conveyed."

"You are inclined to be critical, Miss Coral." It was Mr. Wing now. "How can you have the heart to criticize that 'molten, golden harmony'? Now, I should say that Miss Harland has magic in her finger-tips. Charming, that. Put to the test I fancy she might exercise her magic with the effect of 'molten, golden'—something beside harmony—harvest, turn to substantial account."

"Make a music-teacher of her, do you mean? Poor Ruby!" laughed Coral, with a saucy French shrug. "Genius don't have a chance to rise much higher than that nowadays, Mr. Wing—or culture either. Fortunate Ruby isn't obliged to benefit by that flattering opinion and consequent suggestion of yours."

"You're satirical, Miss Stuyvesant. Won't you favor us next? That tender melody has been of only too short duration."

"Me?—after Ruby? Worlds would not tempt me, Mr. Wing. There's more mischief than magic in my fingers, I'm afraid. There, Randolph, if you've done admiring that Alpine scene in a reverse position, we'll restore the mountains to their natural condition of standing upon their bases instead of their peaks."

She laughed as she turned the loose page, and blushed to find that Dolph was looking at her rather than Alpine clefts and chasms and dreariness of heights.

"It's as well to take comprehensive views from all points of an object, Miss Coral," he answered, with the greatest composure. "Miss Ruby"—springing up as she came sweeping down the length of the room, chatting and laughing with Tracy—"we are discussing the propriety of crowning you with laurels. It's not a question of merit, but of means."

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," though it be no more than a laurel wreath. Disclaiming the responsibility, I fancy I should rather enjoy being invested with the power. As to means emblematic—there!"

She stepped back a pace to a wide-mouthed, towering corner-vase, and broke a twig from the drooping greenery it held, twisting it deftly into shape, and dropping it upon her head.

"Ruby," cried Coral, sharply, "you are crowned yourself with willow. If you are destined to 'wear the willow,' what is to become of the rest of us?"

"Willow, is it?" She lifted her hand and displaced the circlet from its slight rest upon her glossy bands of hair. "I hope it isn't ominous; my greatest weakness inclines me to a little solemn regard for superstitions—Germany did that for me, I suppose."

She affected a little shiver which was scarcely affectation, after all. Was it ominous?

"Apropos of Germany, which suggests music, won't you favor us with that—whatever it was you played on your hidden instrument at Mr. Crag's Peak? I was just remarking that of all your wonderful playing, nothing ever affected me like that."

"At Crag's Peak? How stupid not to remember, and I have utterly forgotten now. It must have been an inspiration, I think; I extemporize sometimes."

"Oh! a little regretfully. 'Be sure you let me know when the spirit moves you again, Ruby.' It was the essence natural of music breathed that day—such as conveys the warmth of the sunshine, the fragrance of flowers, birds' songs and winds' whispers, the roar of the storm and the sweep of the hurricane—if I did not know better, I should say that only one who has been tried in a fiery furnace, who has had depths stirred which we surface mortals seldom reach, could so master the diverse expressions. Of course it's the height of folly to associate any thing of the sort with Ruby, who was shut up with nuns, and after that in language schools, and painting schools, and music schools, all her life."

"Ridiculous, indeed!" Ruby's slow smile and languid air were the furthest remove from the tenderness of the soul. Coral felt that she had breathed through that entrancing mountain melody—wild and warning through its bewildering influence.

"Quite possible," thought Mr. Wing, caressing his glossy whisker and favoring Miss Harland with a prolonged stare of admiration. "The depths are there, whether they've been stirred or not—I'm not so blind but I can see that."

And Mr. Stuyvesant, who had overheard the conversation, gave his lips a quick compression.

"Coral is right," he thought. "It was a strange experience, and a bitter one. I knew that it was Margray who played."

"Apropos of nothing, unless it be those influences which you describe as having been so powerfully conveyed, I fancy I'm impressed by the vague, weird attraction of moonlight," Dolph spoke softly as he clasped the volume Coral had closed. "Suppose we test the fact, Miss Stuyvesant? Is there a moon? I'm sure of an alcove over there behind that drapery, but am less positive regarding the 'silvery effulgence.'"

"How often do you consult an almanac, Mr. Stuart? There is a moon—and stars, too. How is it our native poet's liquid melody runs?"

"And now, as the night was senescent,
As the star-dimmed hint of morn—
At the end of our path a lighthouse
And nebulous luster was born,
Out of which a miraculous crescent
Arose with a duplicate horn,
Astarte's bediamonded crescent
Distinct with its duplicate horn."

"Poor Poe! I'm not very enthusiastic on the subject of poetry, but that wayward, unfortunate genius always calls my most enraptured sympathies into play. The remembrance of his frailties must die before the multitude can truly appreciate the brilliancy and beauty of his productions—it is reserved for the few to do that now. That is one of the world's failings, to individualize sentiments, I presume."

They had crossed the room and stood in the alcove whence Dolph's hand had looped back the curtains. They were half in shadow as seen from the rooms at their back, the pale sheen of moonlight touching their faces and shimmering away in broken drifts, but from without their figures were plainly defined against the brilliancy of gaslight—his, tall, boyish, but with the promise of muscular development; hers, supple, willowy, with a graceful poise suggestive of that lightness of motion which never fails in betokening a corresponding lightness of heart. Her fair face, with the bright hair floating away from it, was turned to look out and upward toward the clear, star-gemmed night sky, with the queen jewel set like a crescent against a glimmering shield; his turned toward her with a tender, dreamy smile hovering about his lips. It made a fair and pleasant tableau.

There was an unseen witness to it whom they did not suspect. Across the way, close under the shadows of the trees which lined the street, muffled in somber garments, a woman was standing. She remained motionless, watching the light and shadow and the two figures framed within it. In that gloom the expression of her face was hidden, and the tall form might have been carved from stone for any change it indicated as the minutes passed.

"The fair Miss Stuyvesant," this shadow-wrapped figure whispered to herself. "The flattered, courted, favored daughter of a wealthy man, and judging by that pretty little tableau, the love of a youth who carries himself with the air of a true Virginia born-and-bred aristocrat. It seems a pity to spoil all that, but spoiled it must be very soon. I know something of that corsair-looking youth; impetuous, hot-headed, daring, with all his sense of chivalrous honor, he would throw considerations of caste to the wind and wed you, Ily-bud, notwithstanding some shadowy circumstances which might be brought to light. That would be a poor revenge for one weaker and more wavering than myself."

She moved on until quite out of range of that jutting window, crossed over and returned, her swift, steady steps carrying her unhesitatingly to the door of the Stuyvesant mansion.

A little later a sable servant passed through the drawing-rooms to the spot where Mr. Stuyvesant still was sitting. He presented a card and waited in silence. The master of the mansion glanced at it mechanically, but from the second of the man's approach a gloom settled over his face, as if knowing intuitively whose coming he would announce.

"Again," he half-muttered. Then aloud: "Show the person into my business reception-room."

The man withdrew, and Mr. Stuyvesant rose to follow. Coral turned and glanced back from their curtained retreat.

"You might almost as well be a country doctor, papa, for all the rest you get. If I were you I would enforce regular office hours, and not break over them for the President himself. Look at him, Randolph. A man of paper's age and position isn't excusable for carrying that fagged look with him forever. You ought to exercise professional restraint over yourself, papa—get out a writ of *non compos mentis*—that's what they call it, isn't it?—and take advantage of the relief it would give you. For this inconsiderate person who intrudes at such an unwarrantable hour, send him about his business, come back and we'll make up a table at cards."

"Perhaps I may," he answered; "but the person must be attended to. I think it is some one after that still vacant place of chapereone—lady propriety."

"Our Mrs. General," said Coral, with a little defiant loss of her bright head. "Papa, don't engage her if she's a 'blown-out candle of a woman,' who wears mits and has her mouth set in the proper P shape. I'm sure to detest her at the best, so don't pray inflict us with those harrowing reminders."

It was a very bleak, wintry sort of smile with which her father answered as he passed on.

"If it were no more than Mrs. General," he thought. "She was narrow, and cold, and mercenary, a mean little spirit far enough short of this woman with all her strength of purpose devoted to the one end of working me ill."

His hesitating step gained firmness, and he entered the reception-room—a kind of private business office in his own house—with a pallor on his set face, and almost a hunted look in his eyes, but with the brave bearing which became his proud old race, his form straightened from that stoop, which of late years had become habitual to him.

Standing under the single jet of light in the room, her wrappings dropping back from her stately shoulders, was the woman he dreaded. For one moment they faced each other, neither speaking, eye meeting eye with the flash of defiance on the one side, of assured mastery on the other. He was first to speak, putting out his clenched hand to rest it hard on a little table near him.

"Again, Margray? Will you never be satisfied? Are you a woman or a fiend, to persist in this? If you have one spark of human feeling left, I implore you to leave me and mine. You shall never ask twice for such justice at my hands as I may be able to do you. For the sake of heaven be satisfied with that and go."

A smile was on her face as she listened, a bitter, mocking, mirthless smile; that alone, with no word from her, would have evidenced how useless was his appeal.

"Go?" The rich, mellow voice was intoned with sarcastic inflection. "Not while life remains to us both; not while you have endurance to suffer and I have power to inflict suffering will you be free from me, Boyd Stuyvesant. The sword of Damocles is a time-worn simile, but most applicable as a comparison to the situation in which you have placed yourself. The years are telling on you, Boyd. You are looking miserably worn and haggard. It is a rather heavy burden to drag around all the more so that a breath of resistance on your part would bring down an overpowering weight. Don't resist, Mr. Stuyvesant; I can't conscientiously say that the advice is given out of regard for you, though it may prove your best policy."

Pallid with strong emotion, with the veins standing out like knotted cords in his forehead, his breath coming hard between his clenched teeth, the lawyer looked at her with the desperation which is calm because held down with an iron will. It was a bitter thing for this man to remain helpless in the meshes, but he was like one snared in a binding net, powerless to act in saving himself.

"Why have you come again?" he asked. "I hoped you might have gone."

"You scarcely expected it, did you? I have come for your decision—no, for the honorable situation of ladies' companion, chaperone, whatnot, in your family, Mr. Stuyvesant. You have had time to think of it since I was here a week ago, though the probation could make no difference in the result. I proposed it that you might have ample time to inform your—ah! household of the change. I trust Mrs. Stuyvesant is prepared. You must allow it was conside-derate of me to be so watchful in guarding against unpleasant consequences by a too sudden communication. What a pity she is so delicate. You have told her, of course?"

"How could I? I tell you, Margray, it is impossible—I that you ask. Give you the place! Bring you under my roof! Leave you to watch over the well-being of my daughter! I would as soon trust her to the mercy of a pythoness."

"Pity!" She dropped into a seat, keeping her face turned toward him, that sneering smile just perceptible about her mouth. "You are not after my father's then. Why, I can trust Ruby to you with the most implicit belief that you will do well by her. With your daughter it is different, though so closely allied."

He threw up his hand with a quick gesture, checking her there, and breaking into fierce utterance.

"Have you no heart at all, I wonder? Have you made that girl a tool to work into your hands? I have promised to deal justly by her, and I will do it, truly, faithfully. Why shouldn't you be satisfied with that? Of all homes in the wide world I should think mine would be the last you would seek, Margray—for yourself, I mean."

"How much maternal solicitude you give me credit for! It is but natural I should desire to be near Ruby, and it is most fortunate that such a happy opening presents itself. Leave off beating about the hedges, Mr. Stuyvesant. I have come again, as I agreed to do, and I will have my effects moved to-morrow. It is not

necessary to suggest that orders be given for my hospitable reception, I presume."

"I tell you it must not be." The haggard face of the man was not so firmly set now; there was a tremulous movement about the muscles of his mouth, and defiance, not assurance, in his tone and glance.

"I will be here to-morrow," she said, rising from the chair, and drawing her shawl close about her. "I have no time to argue the question, but it is settled just the same. Give my love to Ruby, please. By the way, I saw a pretty suggestive picture as I came in, a scene from life, and a charming little bit of dramatic effect; but bay windows with a pair of silly young people within and moonlight without, are apt to produce such. Coral looked as though she enjoyed it. I wonder now what a repetition of something like the effective point of a play, which came to an abrupt end some twenty years ago, would do for that dainty, petted darling of yours, Mrs. Stuyvesant?"

He had been pale before, but the look which swept over his face now was like the ghastliness of death itself. This woman's power over him was unlimited, and she exercised it with-out mercy; but in no other way could she inflict such poignant pain as by threatening danger to the winsome, light-hearted little girl whose merry, gleeful ways and happy tones had kept him in a straighter path than he might have trodden but for her. For, whatever Boyd Stuyvesant's early life might have been, since we saw him first on his ill-omened wedding-day he has been only an honorable gentleman, true, brave, faithful and tender, generous, and striving earnestly to do all his duty toward his fellow-man. Such was the life over which one act of supreme folly—to give it the harsher name—had cast an irremediable blight.

It was pitiable to see this strong man writhe beneath the cruel curb she held, not daring to hold up his head and meet her face to face as he might have done another man. He set his lips close for a moment, with a choking sensation in his throat, making his voice husky when he spoke.

"It is useless to make any appeal to you, Margray; but if all tender feeling has not died within you, you will spare her. I have submitted to you thus far for her sakes—for the sake of Helene and Coral—but unless you keep faith by sparing them, you will not find me the cowardly tool I may seem to be now. I am no enemy. Do your worst; I should defeat and baffle you on every point, but to spare scandal I have submitted to your inordinate demands. You are too proud to take money of mine, but you have drawn upon me for amounts which would have been ruinous to most of men. I have given you all you asked, but more I can not and will not do."

"What a pity you and I can not be of the same mind, Mr. Stuyvesant. More you can do, more you will do, so long as I choose to require it. No, don't stare at me! That stage-suggestive fashion; it is all optical, never turn away, I assure you. Let me repeat, I will be here to-morrow—let us say at four of the afternoon. We professional people pride ourselves upon being methodical."

"What do you mean by it, Margray?" He spoke passionately now. "Do you want to close up society against us? You can't expect to be received as one of us, or think I would subject my wife and daughter to the humiliation of having their names associated with yours? You don't mean any good, that I know. Once more, why do you push yourself into my house, and in such a character as you present?"

"Why?—it is a preposterous question, considering my right to a place in this house, and my will to assume it. Perhaps because I have wearied of the work which is only alluring from the front of the footlights; perhaps I long for an approach to the position to which I have a right; perhaps the maternal instinct prompts me to the step, and Ruby is a daughter of whom a mother surely should be proud; perhaps for some deeper and more dire design than any of these—it is not probable through an intention to be lenient with you."

"Do you know what I shall do the moment you set foot within my doors again? I shall take Helene and Coral back to the villa, and leave you to work your own pleasure here. You can scarcely fail in drawing more censure upon yourself than us."

"As you like, Boyd. But you are alarmed unnecessarily. Not one of all the hosts will recognize in Mrs. Harland, the mother of the reigning belle, the eccentric, and I flatter myself, successful artist who has glinted across their vision in a very different sphere heretofore. Be kind enough to let me pass, Mr. Stuyvesant. The company in your parlors will wonder at your long absence, I am afraid. Don't keep them in suspense, let me advise; it isn't safe to arouse curiosity, however aimless, sometimes, and I think you have a pettifogger in there who might give you trouble if he got an inkling of the secret you have been at such trouble to keep for very near a score of years. Au revoir, Mr. Stuyvesant. We shall meet again—let me hope on better terms. Why can't you accept the most plausible explanation of my course—that I'm willing to live in ease, and even at peace, with you and yours? It is not incredible, quite. Boyd Stuyvesant felt it; and as he stood, after she had left him, colorless and motionless as if turned to stone, stronger waves of bitterness were surging through his soul than even the troublous times past had often brought him."

(To be continued.—Commenced in No. 162.)

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"Yours, very respectfully,
O. L. COOKES."

Characteristic Initials.—One of our observant correspondents has delivered himself of the following:
"Since 'Characteristic Capitals' seems to be the popular pastime just now, I send you a batch of 'Stars,' which you can give the JOURNAL readers, if you think proper: J. D. Burton—Justly Deserved Brains; M. R. Crowell—Many Rich Characters; L. A. Irons—Lovely, Amiable Invalid; E. Lawless—Eloquent Lecturer; W. Whitehorn—Witty Writer; Joe Jot, Jr.—Jovial, Jolly Jingles; Beat Time—Batonhole Tearer; A. W. Aiken—Able, Witty Author; A. P. Morris—A Pattern Martyr (sacrificed to Hygiene); E. E. Rector—Elegant, Easy Rhymer; B. T. Campbell—Best Trained Characters; C. D. Clark—Concocts Delightful Characters; C. H. Howard—Capitally Chosen Handler; H. M. Avery—How Many Adventures! T. C. Harbinger—Truly Correct Handiwork; Mayne Reid—Master Romancer; F. Whitaker—Fleeting Writer; O. L. Cookes—Original Composer; "Brain" Adams—"Brave" Adventurer; Ralph Ringwood—Rare Relator; Joseph E. Badger—Journalizes Ever Brilliantly."

Very good indeed, Mr. Junius. You have hit the authors' characteristics admirably.

Life in the West.—To "Go West" is by no means the best thing to do for the unemployed. We know Mr. Greeley used to declare this the sovereign remedy for want of work, but like a great many other things he said and did, it will bear questioning. To go West with no definite idea of location, calling or prospects is absurd. If a young man has time on his hands and money to spend in order to hunt up his future residence and employment, it is a very good idea to go from the crowded East to the less competitive West, but for a man of family to attempt new life in the West is a very serious thing, and especially so if he does not know just where he is going and just what he is to do. Ohio, to-day, is full of young married men who have "gone West" and returned disgusted and disheartened with their experiment. They, usually, were good workers—farmers' sons, just married and anxious to make a home for themselves or young mechanics, who, having acquired a good trade, went to the newer States to work into business. There was no want of employment to men willing to work, they found, but every day was now, so experimental, so changeable, and so expensive that the year's toll actually had less to show for it than the same toll would have produced in any of the older States. Young men from New England and New York have literally swarmed into Kansas, Nebraska and Minnesota, but go West and talk with these people, and in almost every case you will be informed that the same labor, suffering and sacrifice "at home" would have wrought better results.

The inducements to settle in the West always are coupled with exceeding hard labor, much self-denial, much risk of health and a certainty of waiting for riches to come. To get riches in any new State, suddenly, is as impossible as to make the earth yield six crops in a year. A few men with money at command of course can "speculate"—or, rather, by using their money at three per cent a month, can grow rich rapidly; but these are hyenas, not men; their riches represent just so much of the very life-blood of the hard-pressed farmer, mechanic and manufacturer. The great mass of men have, as their only capital, their hands; to them life in the new land represents days of labor sixteen hours long, sacrifices by man and wife such as they never dreamed of, disappointments in the soil's returns and the prices obtained, ill-health and much very undesirable

self-denial in the way of schools, churches and society.

To one having health and ambition, and who is willing to wait for years for the wished-for competence, the West is a very excellent field for occupation; but, to the eager, restless young man who is not content to wait for fortune, it is no proper place. Nor is it the most desirable place for the man of family, unless he means enough at his disposal to buy out the already partially improved farm of some poor fellow who "can't stand it any longer" in striving to pay for his possessions, and of such there are literally thousands. Nor, would we advise the mere workman to go thither, for employment is no more sure, nor the rewards any better, than in the East. Living, it is true, is cheaper, because food is plenty at almost nominal rates, but the laborer will find at the year's end that he has just as little in his purse as when he started—all has gone for the necessarily high-priced groceries, clothing, doctor's bills, etc.

All this may seem discouraging, but it has this one thing to commend it—it is a fair presentation of the case; and truth, we hold, even if unpalatable, is better than those "glistening generalities" which excite unreasonable expectations and bring disaster in their train.

INQUISITIVE FOLKS.

It's not the height of my ambition to become a dweller in the great and crowded city, even if I had the pleasure of residing in a palace on Fifth Avenue by way of compensation; but my ambition soars just high enough to wish some of my country friends would imitate the non-inquisitive habits of their city cousins. A little remark in the papers I read the other day caused quite a flood of reflections to come over me. The paragraph stated that it was thought very unfashionable in the city to know the concerns of your neighbor. That seems almost too good news to be true, yet, at the same time, I did wish that such a fashion was catching, and, that many of those around me would have such a disease very badly.

These inquisitive people are blessed with no politeness, and their questions are oftentimes savored with downright rudeness. They want to know all about my own personal and private affairs. Assuming that I am a writer for the press, they think I have no rights of privacy and seclusion. My ways and thoughts and tastes, and associations, all are subjects of their scrutiny and remarks. If I go down to the post-office to deposit my mail, they want to know what it is I am sending away, and if I receive a bundle of letters, then they want to know from whence each one came.

If I make a few presents to my friends at the holiday season, these very same friends want to know how much I paid for the gifts, and I almost resolve that the next tokens of my esteem will be in the shape of a book on etiquette to teach them manners.

These same people pester brother Tom as much as they do me, but he just nods his head in a most provoking manner, and hushes them up for a while; I can't do so; I must say something, and by saying that something often make matters much worse. Brother Tom says the best way is to keep silent, but to keep silent is not in my nature.

The information they seek of brother Tom is quite nonsensical and almost too ridiculous to chronicle. They want to know why he don't let his mustache grow longer, or why he don't shave it all off, or if he uses any thing to make it grow, until I should think he'd get so sick of their impertinence, that he'd vent his spleen in remarks of a very forcible nature. He says to me: "Eve, it is good to be of so much consequence as to be talked about, even if it is only the welfare of one's mustache that is inquired after." But then, you know, men folks always are less snappy than we females, and though they may feel as mad as fire, will present a cool and untroubled exterior. Oh, don't I wish I could be so polite!

It is hard—very hard—to keep quiet when these male and female representatives of "Paul Pry" invade the domestic circle and cause us so much misery and unhappiness.

What pleasure is to be derived from poking your nose into other people's cupboards, and, if you have found out what they contain, how much better do you feel, or how much satisfaction have you obtained?

What does this inquisitiveness arise from? Is it from ignorance or officiousness? Is there no way to put an end to it? You may say that the inquisitive folks know no better. Well, if that is the case, I really do wish somebody would go and teach them; I would be money well expended—some of the money, for instance, that these same nuisances drop into the missionary-box each Sunday, with such a consequential air.

I think it is a most despicable trait in any one, to see him, or her, the victim of inquisitive propensities, and often wish there were patent medicines compounded for their cure. It is certainly not neighborly or Christianlike to seek to know the affairs of others when they desire to have them kept strictly private.

There's a vast difference in one's taking an interest in your welfare, and in buying themselves with matters of no concern to you; but they don't seem to see that difference. I've allowed a friend to read this essay, and she says, "What made you write all this?" She was never inquisitive; not she!" EVE LAWLESS.

OSTENTATION.

Is a man happier for bragging about how much he can do? Does he make others think as much of him as they would if he were to possess real merit and make less show about it? It is really sickening to note the number of egotists in this world. Were they to know the exact estimation in which others hold them, they'd not be quite so loud in sounding their own praises.

The truly great actor lets it rest with the public to recognize his talents; he is willing to accept their verdict as to his merits and demerits; but the mushroom upstart will parade around in his cheap jewelry and fine clothes—whether paid for or not is a question—and ding into the ears of his bar-room companions, "I am a star! I am a star!" Poor fellow; his glimmering is very faint; his so-called friends toady him and never disguise his mind of that idea, for from him they will sponge and sponge. Away from his presence they acknowledge him to be a silly, shallow fellow, with little talent, but an immense amount of ostentation and conceit.

A little praise is very often likely to make one imagine himself to be better than he really is, but it does no good to crow over others who can not get the same praise.

Are we not apt to think we are worthy of commendation for the good deeds we may do, when it is simply our duty to do them? Parading our charities in the face of the world, bragging—it is the most fit word—of how much we have subscribed to such-and-such a fund, will make us no better in the eyes of God or man.

It is ridiculous to see men and women flaunting through the streets as though they were the only creatures allowed on this mundane sphere. They seem as though it were a crime for a poor person to even look at them, yet are

they one whit happier, one whit better in any way than the laborer or mechanic? Will death be less relentless to them on account of their fine garments or lofty airs? Will the pains of sickness be less acute because of the costly sheets in which they repose?

We may talk of our greatness (?) as much as we will, but the end will come to us all, sooner or later; we can not stay the hand of death, and the worms of the earth will not stop to consider whether we were as great as we would endeavor to make out, ere they commence their work.

Ostentation will do us no good nor bring us friends, so let us put an end to it. F. S. F.

THE DOCTRINE OF EVOLUTION.

THE Darwinian hypothesis, that every thing in nature is an outgrowth of something similar which preceded it, has become the one "bone of contention" in the world of science and theology, and the discussions now going on enlist the world's best intellects to an extraordinary degree. A fair statement of the question from the standpoint at present assumed by Christian believers, is made in the following:

That there was a constantly varying series of processes going on for ages upon ages, by which modifications in structure were actually produced, resulting in new families of animals or species, is forced upon the mind of the naturalist as being an undeniable fact. All the way up, from the earliest geological periods to the advent of man on the earth, a graduated series is unmistakably recognized. The human hand is seen in its elementary form through a countless series of animals. But if that row of evolution were still in force, the future man of ten thousand years hence would probably differ considerably in form from the best type of humanity of to-day. It does not in the slightest degree conflict with the admitted attributes of the Creator to suppose the work of creation was slowly progressive through unmeasured cycles of time till man appeared. In him, who is declared to be the image of God, matter took forms it never before assumed, resulting in personal consciousness of its existence.

With man's appearance, the purposes of the Almighty were accomplished, and then the conditions which had previously characterized the evolutionary world in regard to animal forms, was suspended. All races, therefore, will hereafter, and from the momentous period when man took his position, have been, and will continue, permanently fixed, never to be remodeled or mechanically altered in structure or function, because the climax of creative wisdom in combining physical, mental and moral qualities was reached as they never had been before. Man's future is to be intellectual development, not physical, nor is it reasonable to suppose any alterations in the mechanism of animals or insects will hereafter occur. The globe, from the nature of its composition, will never be at rest.

Foolscap Papers.

Whitehorn's Show for 1873.

In starting out upon its 109th annual round, with rounds of applause, and drinks all round, the proprietor makes his bow to the public, and begs to offer the following inducements to people who have vowed they would never go to another show as long as they live or longer.

Among other new attractions this year, we might mention that we have got a new suit of clothes, which daily draws thousands to admire it—quite a curiosity.

Our menagerie is complete. We have secured, at great expense, the celebrated Kilkeny cats, who will relate every evening, to delighted audiences, how they got into history.

We have the celebrated lion of the evening, who will relate his history; and also have—
The fox that could easily have got the grapes but—the acidulous qualities would not admit of his taking them;

The dog that tossed the cow with a crumpled horn, that bit the tail of the rat forlorn, that worried the maiden all shaven and shorn, that ate the malt that crowed in the morn that slept in the house that Jack built.

We have, too, the elephant that everybody has seen and would like to see again, and the same old traveling trunk, valise, umbrella and bandbox. He drinks all rivers dry, and crosses on dry ground, as no bridges are strong enough to bear his weight.

We have the royal Bengal tiger, with three cheers—the only living one in the world; the rhinoceros, which can be seen if you come down with the rhino, without the *ceros*—the best old rhin in the land; seventeen porcupines, the best pines on the American globe—we *opine*.

We have on exhibition four mooses, and the nine muses, brought down from their Parnassian heights, with a large salary and a short gun; and Alexander's horse Bucephalus, which nobody could ride but Alex himself. If he is able to be out he will show his feet of horsemanship;

The celebrated hound that gallops so lively after the fox through all well-regulated arithmetics, at the rate of so many steps in so much time, etc., etc.

The bird in the hand that was worth two in the bush, or in the bushel.

One zebra, calculated to make a stir in the world because zebras loud;

One large ape, caught in the month of April without any ape-ology, while he was ape-rooping ape-ricots in the Grecian Arch-ape-elago—of fine ape-ance and worthy of ape-lause;

Several bare-faced Wall street bears.

The learned pig will delight the audience every evening by telling them what he nose of many things. And, furthermore, we have—
A fine case of antie monkey wrenches;

A fine pair of buffaloes, imported at vast expense from Buffalo, N. Y.;

The celebrated Phoenix bird, that used to rise from its ashes—it lived in an ash-barrel;

A very large den of snakes, real anacondas, caught in the boots of a fellow who had the delirium tremens; also sixteen little imps, taken, after much labor, from the imagination of the same fellow;

The celebrated prodigal calf, which the prodigal son's father killed because he didn't want two in the family;

A fine selection of chickens. These were caught after night, at great risk and peril, in the wilds of a New Jersey barnyard. The expedition was commanded by the proprietor—of the show, not of the chickens, he was not in the affair.

Professor Frangipani will cause your blood to curdle and turn sour by fearfully putting his head into the jaws of a—of a stuffed alligator. The proprietor, who is the greatest hurdle-rider living, will perform his celebrated feat of riding on a hurdle at a terrific gate; dance on two legs and balance himself on a pair of steel-yards.

We have the best vaulters in the world; they have been in open re-vault so long because they can't turn a summerset and light on their wages that they are quite proficient.

Monsieur Blank is the most finished gymnast in the world—he is no relation to Tom Nast. He lately tried to turn over a new leaf and broke both his legs; that finished him.

One great bar-performer jumps over five bars; he patronizes each one on the sly.

We have a large band of twelve pieces that give no peace at all.

The proprietor will show one of his grand and daring feats of horsemanship by fearfully currying off a horse in the ring.

The circumference of our tents has never been paralleled. We have eighteen immense pavilions managed by many pay-villains, they cover more sins and sinners than charity rolled out thin ever could.

Our circus-riders have been practicing a great deal during the last year and have got so proficient that it only takes two now to ride on one horse; and they only have to hold on with both hands. They tear around the ring now in a neck-breaking walk, which makes the audience hold their breath and pocketbooks.

The principal acts will be some highly exciting Acts of Congress.

A full chorus of clowns will make a fool of themselves and you, too.

The procession will go around at ten, and will be one mile and forty minutes long. Gentlemen must not follow too close upon the heels of the mules.

WASHINGTON WHITEHORN, Proprietor.

Short Stories from History.

Carrier Pigeons.—The first mention we find made of the employment of pigeons as letter-carriers is by Ovid, in his "Metamorphoses," who tells us that Tauros, the pigeon, by a pigeon stained with purple, gave notice of his having been victor at the Olympic games on the very same day to his father at Argina.

Pliny informs us that, during the siege of Modyna by Marc Antony, pigeons were employed by Brutus to keep up a correspondence with the besieged.

When the city of Ptolemais, in Syria, was invested by the French and Venetians, and it was ready to fall into their hands, they observed a pigeon flying over them, and immediately conjectured that it was charged with letters to the garrison. On this, the whole army raising a loud shout, so confounded the poor aerial post that it fell to the ground, and, on being seized, a letter was found under its wings, from the sultan, in which he assured the garrison that "he would be with them in three days, with an army sufficient to raise the siege." For this letter the besiegers substituted another to their purpose, "that the garrison must see to their own safety, for the sultan had such other affairs pressing him that it was impossible for him to come to their succor," and with this false intelligence they let the pigeon free to pursue his course. The garrison, deprived of this decree of all hope of relief, immediately surrendered. The sultan appeared on the third day, as promised, with a powerful army, and was not a little mortified to find the city already in the hands of the Christians.

Carrier pigeons were again employed, but with better success, at the siege of Leyden, in 1672. The garrison were, by means of the information thus conveyed to them, induced to stand out, till the enemy, despairing of reducing the place, withdrew. On the siege being raised, the Prince of Orange ordered that the pigeons, who had rendered such essential service, should be maintained at the public expense, and that at their death they should be embalmed and preserved in the town-house, as a perpetual token of gratitude.

In the East the employment of pigeons for the conveyance of letters is still very common; particularly in Syria, Arabia and Egypt. Every bashaw has generally a basket full of them sent him from the grand seraglio, where they are bred, and in case of any insurrection, or other emergency, he is enabled, by letting loose two or more of these extraordinary messengers, to convey intelligence to the government long before it could be possibly obtained by other means.

Flanders great encouragement is also still given to the training of pigeons; and at Antwerp there is an annual competition of the society of pigeon fanciers.

In the United States they have been also recently employed, with very nefarious success, by a set of lottery gamblers. The numbers of the tickets drawn at Philadelphia were known by this mode of conveyance within so inconceivably short a period at New York, or, if drawn at New York, known at Philadelphia, and so with other towns, that the greatest frauds were committed on the public by those in possession of this secret means of intelligence.

In England the use of carrier pigeons is at present wholly confined to the gentlemen of the *funny*, who inherited it from the heroes of Tyburn, with whom it was of old a favorite practice to let loose a number of pigeons at the moment the fatal cart was drawn away, to notify to distant friends the departure of the unhappy criminal.

The diligence and speed with which these feathered messengers wing their course is extraordinary. From the instant of their liberation their flight is directed through the clouds at an immense height to the place of their destination. They are believed to dart onward in a straight line, and never descend except when at a loss for breath, and then are to be seen, commonly at dawn of day, lying on their backs on the ground, with their bills open, sucking in with hasty avidity the dew of the morning. Of their speed, the instances related are almost incredible.

The Consul of Alexandria daily sends dispatches by this means to Aleppo in five hours, though couriers occupy the whole day in proceeding with the utmost expedition from one town to the other.

Some years ago a gentleman sent a carrier-pigeon from London, by the stage coach, to his friend at Bury St. Edmund's, together with a note, desiring that the pigeon, two days after its arrival there, might be thrown up precisely when the town-clock struck nine in the morning. This was done accordingly, and the pigeon arrived in London, and flew to the Bull Inn, in Bishopsgate street, into the loft, and was there shown at half an hour past eleven o'clock, having flown seventy-two miles in two hours and a half. At the annual competition of the Antwerp pigeon-fanciers, in 1819, one of thirty-two pigeons belonging to that city, who had been conveyed to London, and there let loose, made the transit back, being a distance in a direct line of one hundred and eighty miles, in six hours!

Readers and Contributors.

To Correspondents and Authors.—No MSS. received that are not fully prepaid in postage.—No MSS. preserved for future editions.—Unusable MSS. promptly returned only when stamps accompany the inclosure, for return.—No correspondence of any nature is permissible in a package marked as "Book MS."—MSS. which are imperfect are not used or wasted. In all cases our choice rests first upon merit or fitness; second, upon excellence of MS. as "copy"; third, length. Of two MSS. of equal merit we always prefer the shorter.—Never write on both sides of a sheet. Use Commercial Note also paper as most convenient to editor and compiler, tearing off each page as it is written, and carefully giving it its full or page number.—A rejection by us means implies a want of merit. Many MSS. unsuitable to us are well worthy of use.—All experienced and popular writers will find us ever ready to give their offerings early attention.—Correspondents must look to this column for all information in regard to contributions. We can not write letters except in special cases.

We can not use these contributions. Only those are returned where stamps were enclosed for such purpose: "Saved by a Red-skin"; "A Settler's Story"; "A Loyal Heart"; "My First Speculation"; "Choose Between Us"; "The Boatman's Signal"; "Rag-griffin Jack"; "The Tower Bell"; "A Long Pull"; "The Two Acrobats"; "When Time is no More"; "A Brazen Offer"; "The Short Pipe"; "Gallant"; "Mrs. Proudfoot's Dinner Party"; "Hans Ritterschling's Prayer"; "That Ghostly Ghost"; "Little Ben's Post"; "The One Crime."

FLORA A. H. Have answered by mail.
J. R. M. We want syllabus of a serial. The MS. itself alone is necessary to a decision.

P. P. F. If your postmaster is ignorant of the postal laws you are not exonerated from his blunders. You must "grin and bear."

ELLEN CLARK. An herbarium is a very admirable thing to prepare. It is both study and recreation. Botany is best learned by practice.

MRS. B. B. F. There may be a cure for short sight, but we have never seen it. It is a matter of fact, and is the only initiative we know. Be sure to use the purest glass.

HAL HALSTEAD. A journalist's profession is not profitable—save in the rarest instances. It is hard work and poor pay. About one in ten succeeds in obtaining a position which does not entail humiliating service.

CHARLEY P. The racing station Lexington died recently in Kentucky. He was foaled in 1857. His stock is regarded with very high favor in the West. The Standard game stock has not run out but has been somewhat superseded by the more fancy Hambletonian. Both are excellent.

Mrs. PAXTON. Moths can be quickly driven from woollens or carpets by the following preparation, viz.: Flour of hops, one drachm; Scotch snuff, two ounces; gun camphor, one ounce; black pepper, one ounce; cedar sawdust, four ounces. Mix thoroughly, and a row, or put into papers, among the goods, or strew on the floor around the edges of the carpet. This recipe is very largely used by the housewives.

MAULM Z. It is now conceded that the old remedy of warm water is the best solvent of accumulated wax in the ear, being superior to olive oil, glycerine, etc. In fact the tepid water is the best.

MISS CLARA. The "Preston Smelling Salts" are made from the following formula, viz.: "Slacked lime, half an ounce; sal ammoniac, half an ounce; carbonate of ammonia, half an ounce; black pepper, one ounce; cedar sawdust, four ounces. Mix thoroughly, and a row, or put into papers, among the goods, or strew on the floor around the edges of the carpet. This recipe is very largely used by the housewives.

ELIZA G. G. It is our opinion that any young man who wants to correspond with you under a fictitious name, is no friend of the cause. He is a scoundrel, and seeks a disguise. You are known to him, but he is to you wholly unknown—truly a very unequal and undesirable union. "I don't want to write to him, nor take his letters from the office."

MISS LUZZIE P. The trailing arbutus is one of the earliest and loveliest of wild flowers. It is known botanically as *ephippasia repens*, and is a native of the mountains of New England it is better known as "Mayflower." It is a prostrate plant, the leaves of which are on slender petioles, are alternate, and the edges are reticulated, rounded and heart-shaped. Hunt for it in your woods and fields.

YOUNG FARMER. The time proper for scion cutting is in March; but those cut in April will do well. The wood should be of last year's growth and cut out of the tree top. The "sprouts" from the lower limbs or free body, are not as good as the hardy growth of the older limbs of the tree. A poor scion can be made by cutting the process is very simple. Have some one show you how once, and then you can go ahead and put in your own fruit. A poor scion can be made by cutting the process is very simple. Have some one show you how once, and then you can go ahead and put in your own fruit. A poor scion can be made by cutting the process is very simple. Have some one show you how once, and then you can go ahead and put in your own fruit.

WAMBAKONA. A. W. A. is the author of the following Dime Novels: "Eagle Plume," "Red Coyote," "White Vulture," "Mammoth," and "Prairie Whirlwind." The latter under the nom de plume of Capt. Frank Armstrong. Lewis Gardner wrote the novel "White Serpent." The P. O. Department, by one of its inexplicable absurd rulings, has decided that M. S. A. "book," must be nothing whatever but the MS.—not even permitting the author's address on it, and on the wrapper thereon, but that whenever the author's name is on the book, it is a postmaster's duty to consign it to letter postage! Of course this is a most impudent and arbitrary violation of the spirit and letter of the postal law, for how is a postmaster to tell that M. S. A. "book," unless the author so supercribes it? and it virtually denies to the author proprietorship in his property by prohibiting his name on the book, but no matter, the course to pursue is to send nothing whatever, the wholly irresponsible mail which the responsible express will carry.

THOMAS CARLISLE. Carbonic acid gas is heavier than pure air, and in some cases it has been known to lie upon the ground like pools of water. In the Doge's Grotto, near Naples, an animal will die as soon as exposed to its gas, while plants thrive upon it. It is a fact, however, that the carbonic acid gas with great benefit. This will rather overthrow the theory of physicians, that "plants die of the gas," but it is a fact, however, that the carbonic acid gas that the sleeper expels from the lungs is consumed by the plants, thereby benefiting the air of the room.

ANNA D. It is peculiar, but true, that among the 80,000 Jews in England they have Eight Representatives in the House of Commons, while all of the rest are Protestants—the 300,000 Catholics not having a single Representative in that body.

MARTHA WASHINGTON. Antine is obtained by the distillation of coal tar, and furnishes material for numerous colors in use.

CHARLEY VANCE. Never apply for any situation without proper testimonials. In the knowledge of this, if otherwise you will only meet with refusal and mortification.

GEORGE BENSON. No young girl with respect for herself would ever receive a proposal from a man, who is a stranger unless it were a matter of simple politeness, or on business. If a young girl don't respect herself, no one else will.

CARFENTER. Young men should marry as soon as they are fully able to support a wife. To marry too soon sometimes embarrasses a young man in his progress.

PRINCE ALEXIS. It is not generally taken into consideration that if a man marries at twenty-five, and his wife be fifty, and in his prime she will be fifty, and an old woman. It is desirable that there should not be too great a difference between the age of the man and woman, and the man should be the elder.

JOHN J. T. The saying, "Sent to Coventry," originated, we believe, as follows: In the time of Charles I. the Parliamentary army, whenever they captured Royalists, sent their prisoners to Coventry, and from that circumstance it became usual for disobedient persons to be threatened with being sent to Coventry.

MICHAEL McP. The first Irish emigrants to America came from the North of Ireland. During the Revolutionary War there were a few enlisted and made good soldiers in the armies of Washington, at the same time that a considerable number of their countrymen were fighting on the other side against the colonies.

YOUNG SAILOR. The oldest steamship in the world, or rather the first one, was the *Industry*, of Glasgow, Scotland, which was launched in the year 1789.

TRAVELER. The chestnut tree growing upon Mount Etna is variously stated to be from 180 to 240 feet in circumference near the ground, and its branches will shelter a hundred persons. It is named the *Castaño del Cento Cavalieri*, from the circumstance that it once sheltered a hundred cavaliers.

MARY. You are quite right. The hair does grow after death. Lord Howe, who was killed during the French and Indian War, was buried temporarily at Albany, and many years afterward, prior to his removal to Westchester Abbey, his coffin was opened, and it was found that his hair had grown out in long and beautiful locks.

INQUIRE. "Middlemarch" is a provincial town in England. The book by that name treats of provincial life.

A. F. H. The milk tree, or as it is most frequently called, the "cow tree," grows to the height of two hundred feet. It is found on the east-coast of Venezuela, and in many other places. The milk obtained from its tree is very agreeable, and is used by the inhabitants in their tea and coffee. Medicinally it is an astringent, and is considered a specific in cases of dysentery, even in the latest stages. It is to be hoped that this remedy, which can be kept a year without injury, will be brought to the United States and tested in cases of cholera.

ELIZABETH E. C. The meaning of your name is, "Worship of God"—"or," "Consecrated to God."

Unanswered questions on hand will appear next week.

SHADOWS.

BY JOHNNIE DARR.

There are shadows in the evening,
There are shadows in the morn,
Shadows o'er the aged, dying—
Shadows on the child new-born;
Shadows, flitting in the sunlight,
Misty shadows in the air,
Shadows—fore, behind, around us,
There are shadows everywhere.

Sitting alone in my snug little room
At the close of a beautiful day,
A thought of the shadows came into my mind
And then how to drive them away.
I thought of the story of Ned, the mill-boy,
Who, once on the road met a ghost,
And was terribly frightened for nearly an hour,
Till he found it an ancient guide-post.
So 'tis with our shadows: we cover away,
And give our wild fancies the rein,
Till we're almost insane with terror and fear
Before reason comes back again.

'Tis said that the hour that comes near the dawn
Is the darkest of all the long night;
And so with our shadows, the darkest are found
As we closer approach to the light.
So, friends, as we go on our pathway through life,
No matter by day or by night,
When the shadows are thickest, and hottest the
light,
Be sure you are nearest the light.

Barbara's Fate:

OR,

A BRIDE, BUT NOT A WIFE.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE BLIND," "OATH BOUND," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WIFE OR WIDOW?

At the door of the drawing-room Barbara met Roy Davenal.

His inquiring glance was understood by her as fully as words could have been.

"Yes," she replied. "He came, obedient to my summons, and, after he departed, I heard his footstep returning to the observatory; if it was to renew our not particularly pleasant conversation, he will be disappointed; for I left just as he did."

Not a tremor of her eyelids or a quiver of the lips as she accepted his arm and entered the thronged rooms.

"Roy," she said, tenderly, "I can depend upon you not to mention the fact that I met Mr. De Laurian alone in the observatory? I would not enjoy the petty scandal it might cause."

"I certainly shall not mention it, my dearest, unless it be to De Laurian himself at some convenient season after the bridal tour. He must apologize to me, Barbara."

She smiled brightly.

"I think that would be no more than right." They had reached the rear end of the drawing-room, where Blanche had held her little court since the wedding hour, and who now was rather anxiously consulting a tiny little watch, set in pearls, that depended, like a lock-et, from the necklace at her throat.

"Oh, Barbara, I'm so glad you've come! I'm worried because Gervaise stays so long, and I'm ashamed to tell any one. I wonder where he went to? We'll surely lose the train."

Barbara laid her hand caressingly on Blanche's golden hair.

"The bridegroom has grown forgetful, has he? Probably detained by some bachelor friends over a parting glass of champagne. Isn't it cruel?"

She laughed down in the brown eyes, that wore a shadow 'way down in their clear depths. "Mamma thinks he should have come to escort me up-stairs; I ought to have changed my dress before now."

Why did not that loving, trusting girl read the fearful secret in those beautiful eyes that were smiling down into her own? Why did she not shrink in utter horror from under that cool, caressing hand? Or why did not some voice whisper in Roy Davenal's ear the awful truth as the beautiful woman leaned so confidently on his arm?

The hour was still afar off when the mask should fall.

"I am sure mamma Chetwynd is not nervous, whatever you are, little bride. Rest assured Mr. De Laurian is secure, wherever he is."

She only knew the hidden meaning conveyed in her own words.

During their brief conversation, the guests had gradually left the room, to fill the conservatory, music-room and upper chambers; and, as Roy excused himself to accompany a young gentleman to the billiard-room, Barbara touched Blanche's shoulder.

"Come, and I will assist you now to don your traveling-dress. I think very likely Mr. De Laurian is in his room, preparing for the journey himself."

So, kindly and thoughtfully, Barbara assisted Blanche to her room, and then insisted on her sitting in the easy-chair while she removed the veil, wreath, gloves, jewels and slippers.

"I am shivering dreadfully, Barbara. Is the register all open? I wonder what makes me so chilly?"

Her hands felt wearily to her side as Barbara withdrew the tiny white kids.

"Nothing but nervous excitement, my dear; I suppose all brides feel so."

And her own bridal rose up before her with a vividness that sent a pang shooting through her heart.

"I feel so uneasy about Gervaise, Barbara. Why, I never heard of such a thing as a bridegroom deserting his bride so soon."

"For a couple of hours?" Barbara laughed; then added, lightly, "perhaps it's the 'Curse,' dear."

A scream fell from Blanche's lips.

"Oh, no! I have not dared let myself think of that aloud! Oh, Barbara, what made you speak my own fears?"

But Barbara looked sternly at the frightened girl.

"They were idle, playful words, Blanche; and I am thoroughly ashamed of you."

The tears gushed in Blanche's eyes.

"I know I'm childish; but something is wrong, Barbara; I feel it here."

She laid her hand on her breast, and then arose from the chair to exchange her white robes for the garnet velvet suit, of which one of her traveling-suits was made.

Her toilet was made quickly, and then Barbara paused before her in earnest scrutiny.

"How beautiful you are, Blanche! peace be with you!"

And then she went out from the dressing-room, swallowing a sob as she closed the heavy walnut door.

In the hall she met Mrs. Chetwynd, anxious and somewhat hurried.

"Barbara, it is very strange, but where can Gervaise possibly be? No one has seen him for an hour or more."

Barbara raised her eyebrows in surprise.

"Is that so? I saw him myself less than an hour ago, and gave him a letter one of the servants had for him."

"You did? And where was he?"

"In the dining-room; and when he asked me for the quietest room in the house to read his letter, I mentioned the observatory."

"The observatory!" echoed Mrs. Chetwynd, with almost a sob of relief. "Of course the poor fellow has gone there to read his letter and fastened himself in—I've heard of the curious spring in the door."

She hastened off to tell Mr. Chetwynd, and together they went up the stairs that led to the fatal room.

Mr. Chetwynd was not a second unfastening the door; he pressed in, followed by his wife and Barbara, and then—

A horrid scream from Barbara, echoed by Mrs. Chetwynd, resounded through the Chase; with tottering tread, Mr. Chetwynd crossed the intervening space and laid his hand on De Laurian's icy cold forehead.

But it needed not that to tell the awful truth; for the glassy, vacant eyes, wide open in a trance of horror, the rigid attitude, had revealed the fact that the first installment of the Curse had already fallen on poor Blanche's innocent head—as she sat below, all unconscious that she was a widowed bride, waiting for him who would never come, to begin the bridal tour they never would take!

And Barbara Lester's heart thrilled with wild triumph!

CHAPTER XIX.

A LOST LOVER.

DAY after day of that pitiful bridal season wore away, each fraught with new grief and loneliness.

The inquest had been held at Chetwynd Chase, and the verdict, substantiated by the opinions of eminent physicians, was that Gervaise De Laurian had come to his death by a sudden attack of heart-disease, to which he had been long predisposed, and which was immediately superinduced by the inopportune arrival of a harassing business communication, that at any time might have illy affected him.

People were loud in the praises they bestowed upon the dead man's memory; they tenderly sympathized with the bereaved bride; spoke touchingly of the blow that had killed him—the knowledge that he had that he was a poor man, all unfit to wed the daughter of the house of Chetwynd Chase.

The papers filled columns with a sensational version of the story, and everybody from Maine to the Pacific coast was familiar with the sad facts. Then they buried him, in almost royal pomp, in the family vault, that was built in a cypress grove on the De Laurian estate.

Later, a new excitement followed; his executor published a card affirming that after a full and searching settlement of deceased's affairs, it was found that but one mortgage existed—and that only to the trifling amount of eight thousand dollars, which Mr. De Laurian would have readily paid when due, which would not yet occur for several weeks. The estate was otherwise unincumbered.

Then what meant that letter the wisecracks declared had been the means of his death? Gradually, vague suspicions began to arise; the letter had been a forgery, then, but for what purpose, and executed by whom?

And somehow, no one ever knew who started it, came the impression that there had been foul play; perhaps, after all, Mr. De Laurian had been put out of the way; and, as there certainly had been not a mark of violence on his person, the means used had been internal ones—in plain words, people began to believe Mr. De Laurian had been poisoned.

Arrangements were made to have his body removed from the vault; the arrangements were completed, and while the excited public were awaiting further developments, there burst on them like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, the appalling news that Mr. De Laurian's body had been removed from the vault, and the coffin left unattended!

Nine days of wildfire excitement; days of wonder, suspicion, distrust and indignation; and then, baffled and disappointed, the world settled down with another unsolved mystery hanging to its skirts.

Wearily and heavily the days dragged on at Chetwynd Chase; to the pallid girl-bride, whose pitiful grief was extremely touching, and whose stricken parents who plainly saw the skeleton fingers of Lady Constanza's Curse in the great blight that had come upon them.

But, coequal with the expressed sentiment of sympathy and pity for the parents and Blanche, was the one of admiration for beautiful Miss Lester, who had so openly and nobly used every available means toward clearing the mystery.

Secretly, while she rejoiced that De Laurian had had his coveted cup dashed from him by her hands, she was worn by the sudden news that the demise of the disappearance of his body from its coffin; and, after wretched nights and nervous days, had taught herself that the minutest examination by the warmest friend—if any such had abducted him in a fit of indignant enthusiasm—would fail to detect the faintest trace of the subtle poison he had inhaled.

Openly, she was all affection, all sympathy, all attention. Not enough could she seem to do for Blanche, who clung to Barbara in all this trouble like a delicate vine to the sturdy oak.

Mr. Chetwynd was proud, reserved as ever, seemingly flitting even the fatal legacy that had come to him, to crush him.

But to Blanche he was ever most tender, most gentle, and always referred to De Laurian with an affectionate interest that the more won the girl's broken heart.

Mrs. Chetwynd, with her lovely, confiding nature, felt the blow almost as keenly as Blanche did. Their tears, lamentations and prayers were daily mingled, and then Barbara, so sympathizing and pitiful, would clasp her sister tenderly in her arms and weep silently over her.

Thus the days and weeks wore on, and the affair grew unimportant save to the aching hearts that were so slow in the healing.

The bright May days came peeping in, and they drove out occasionally to relieve the sad, silent monotony of home, and an old cherished friend or close acquaintance would call oftener than before.

And, as the merciful hands of Time poured the healing balm in their hearts, their faces grew lighter as the glorious summer days wore away, and with the gay-tinted autumn flowers came sweet laughter from Blanche's lips that told her heart was recovering, with all the olden freshness and exuberance.

All this while, Roy Davenal had been away from Chetwynd Chase; and again, with the autumn, he returned for a visit.

But there was a change in her erstwhile ardent lover, Barbara plainly saw.

His protestations of affection were less frequently uttered, and she realized that, for some reason, her power over him—the rare, fascinating influence she had so successfully exerted—was gradually growing less.

This knowledge terrified her; for, with the mysteriously strange influences that had operated upon her, Barbara had discovered that she had learned to love this noble, honest-hearted lover, with a devotion, that had she known in earlier days, would have saved many a pang.

But that was over with now; she had loved De Laurian, and she had hated as well; now, for this loyal, patient lover she was pouring out an affection born of great sorrow—of its womanly purity, we will not speak.

And so, this strange, almost imperceptible change fired, her with a regretful anguish. Mightier even than the quick, hot passion she had entertained for De Laurian—but that would have saved her had he so willed it—was this love that had surged up and back, for Roy Davenal; she must center her affections on some one; such women are doomed to love—or curse—with their affections in a whole-souled, absorbing manner.

And Roy—we know how for years he had rushed madly on; bewildered, infatuated with her glorious beauty.

How all this change had come about, he only realized when away from the dazzling light of her eyes, and the witching sound of her voice.

When with her, he was so proud that she was all his own—poor, deluded man—and, instead of breaking the meshes of the net that enslaved him, he suffered the cords to grow firmer and stronger.

At length—so sudden and sharp the rending asunder came that it terrified himself—his goddess was destroyed, and he knew, for a fearful truth, that she was a woman whose hands were not the hands he ever should clasp at the altar.

It had happened very simply, naturally, quite in the ordinary course of affairs—if that can be called "ordinary," that crushes a confidence of years and uproots a love that has grown with a man's youth and strengthened with his strength. He had read the papers; he had learned all the particulars, and then he had grown to speculate on the ghastly subject.

He plainly recalled the careless lie Barbara had told Blanche as she leaned on his arm; he had been surprised then; but now it wore a far different aspect. He remembered of what a willful, passionate nature Barbara had ever been; he knew De Laurian had had a stormy interview with her; she admitted he had grossly insulted her, and that she should punish him. All this had annoyed him from the moment he had heard of De Laurian's death; but the inquest had satisfied him—or rather, he had forced himself to be content therewith, and gone back to his Western home with only a sad gravity of manner that was naturally attributed to the distressful state of affairs.

Then had come the suggestions of poison—that had horrified him; then the fact of the forged letter; and he groaned in very anguish as the awful suspicion would thrust itself upon him; and when, later, he learned that the body had been stolen from its sacred resting-place, he knew, for a sickening verity, that Barbara Lester had had the deed done to cover her own guilty tracks.

It was appalling; yet what could he do? tell his honest suspicions to the world, and brand her, whom he had so worshiped, a murderer? help with the hands that had so often caressed her, to fasten the hangman's rope around that dainty throat? He could not; it would not bring De Laurian back, or heal Blanche Chetwynd's broken heart—poor, poor Blanche!

And then his fingers refused to pen the love-letters he was so wont to write; "a rush of business," he told Barbara, prevented long letters; when he came in October to Chetwynd Chase, he would see her once more.

Ah, little did Barbara think, as she dreamed of and waited for his coming, that he, pacing his floor on restless, sleepless nights, was struggling and fighting with himself to banish the last remnant of love for her.

And then, while she—this jealous and dangerous woman—with a heart of living flame, was counting the hours to his return, he had decided that when they met again he would return her his plighted troth.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TIGRESS AROUSED.

UPON his return to Chetwynd Chase, early in the fall, Roy Davenal was gratified to find how very much the cloud had lifted off the bereaved family; he was delighted at the warm, cheerful reception given him, and he thought how charming an air Blanche's trouble had left upon her. Her winning, engaging girl-widow, whom he did not call Mrs. De Laurian, but Blanche, as in the olden days, Barbara was radiant, matchlessly brilliant as ever, but Roy knew his days of blind yet blissful slavery were over forever.

He had fully come to know that she was the last woman in all the world to be his wife; and, in the six weeks that followed his return to the Chase—those six weeks in which his devotion to Barbara gradually slackened, and which Barbara noted—in these six breezy, delicious weeks, Roy Davenal had learned a new, strange lesson that he feared to teach Barbara. And then his fingers refused to pen the love-letters he was so wont to write; "a rush of business," he told Barbara, prevented long letters; when he came in October to Chetwynd Chase, he would see her once more.

It was an extremely delicate affair, and one that, since his sojourn at Chetwynd Chase, had grown to be of greater magnitude and more extreme delicacy than ever.

But he had fully decided that, come what would, he would kindly tell her they must part forever; and why? Not because he believed her hands were stained with Gervaise De Laurian's blood, but that another, fair as the lily and pure as the angels, had crept all unawares into his heart; that, with the holiest, truest, calmest love of which man's heart is capable, he had learned—first to pity, then to love—Blanche De Laurian.

She had grown very dear to him in those six weeks; she had come to be a very star of light to his eyes—perhaps because of the mental contrast he could not avoid drawing between her and Barbara.

He had come to learn to watch for her sweet presence, and to gaze on her delicate, chastened face, as the greatest delights earth held for him.

Of her own heart he knew almost nothing. True, when she had caught an ardent, eloquent glance from him, her sweet brown eyes would droop, and a tell-tale tint surge over her rare face.

Not a word had he liped of this—not a hint had he given Blanche, for Roy Davenal was too noble and honorable to stoop to such a deed when his betrothal vows still bound him to Barbara Lester.

But one warm, cloudy day in the middle of October, when the air was oppressive and surcharged with electricity, he resolved to seek Barbara, and end the carking suspense.

He walked slowly to and fro on the lawn that sloped down to the river, and from her room window, Barbara watched him as he walked.

She had just made her toilette—a task she could perform so well—and now as she stood before her dressing-bureau to give the last finishing touches, she wondered if Roy would admire her in that dress; and whether she could not win from him a warmer love-protest than she had listened to for so long.

Her dress was very elegant—a thin silk gown of intensest black, over whose ground

was embroidered a graceful vine in rose-pink and gold-colored silk, from which at intervals depended a bundle of golden grapes and a leaf of deep autumn red.

This singular and costly dress particularly became her, and Roy had before admired the white arms and neck which the sheer folds but half concealed.

She fastened the filmy lace collar with a large cluster diamond pin, and hung rings of the same glittering gems in her little pink ears.

The folds of the lace curtains draped around her as she sat down, and looked out upon her lover, wondering at the brightness of his face as he bowed to some one below.

Ever jealous of his favors, she leaned out to see who was there; her brow darkened, and she pressed her lips angrily together as she saw, blushing, yet confused and retiring, Blanche De Laurian.

Barbara's quick, jealous eyes perceived how surpassingly fair she was, her unrelieved white dress floating around her and over the velvety grass, and her lovely golden hair arranged high over the forehead and in long, thick curls at the back. She saw the costly jet ornaments that lent a beauty of their own to her flushed face, and the anguishful thought thrilled her—would—could Blanche supplant her in Roy Davenal's affections—she, who had once before blighted every hope she held dear?

If she should! and the flash of defiance in her eyes denoted the light in which she should regard such interference.

Just then, she was summoned to the parlor; Mr. Davenal would be pleased to see her.

The frown disappeared, and she immediately went down to the parlor, both hands extended in, and her eyes beaming, a glad welcome.

"I am so glad, Roy, you have sent for me to come down. I was just wishing to see you."

He suffered her to lead him to the sofa, and then, when he had seated himself, she drew a haddock to his feet, and seating herself, leaned her elbow on his knee.

He did not yet speak; he was scrutinizing her varying features.

"Have you no greeting for me, Roy?" She murmured his name in tones of liquid tenderness, as she raised her eyes to his.

"I surely neglected my duty if I failed to do so."

The tones, though courteous, were decidedly distant, and she instantly perceived it.

"Roy—what have you come to tell me? Why do you speak so formally to me? Are you angry with me, dearest? Have I offended you? If I have, you can punish me no more severely than by being so stern."

"I did not mean—that is, I did not think you would care," returned Roy, hesitatingly, for now that the time had come, he dreaded arousing her temper.

"But I do care, Roy, darling. How could it be otherwise when I love you so; when every word you utter goes straight to my heart, and is never forgotten?"

Her voice was low, and under her half-veiled lids, Davenal noted the witching tenderness of her eyes.

"You will pardon me, Barbara, if I am compelled to speak as I would not speak? I would gladly spare you the emotions you must experience when I tell you what I dare not delay to keep from you. Be ready to hear bad tidings which would wound me while they wound you."

An amazed expression on her face that gathered when he began speaking, gave way to a triumphant smile; and she leaned her head caressingly on his hand.

"Roy, how could you frighten me so? I thought you were going to tell me you had ceased to love me; for that is the only news that would wound me."

He shivered as he heard her words.

"But suppose that were the news I had to communicate?"

Like a lightning-flash she sprung from her low seat, her eyes glowing with excitement.

"Then I'd murder you, Roy Davenal!"

"Barbara—No! I can not listen to such language. I will leave you till you are calm."

He arose and bowed coldly.

"No!—stay, I will be calm. Stay, Roy, and tell me what it is I must hear. For your sake I will be calm."

As by magic, her anger died away under the swift-returning tide of love.

Reluctantly he resented himself; and when she laid her warm, thrilling fingers on his hand, he wondered how he could tell her. He pitied her at that moment from the bottom of his heart.

"It is vain to desire to recall the past," he began, "yet I linger before I decide the future."

Our future, Barbara, is not what we have both dreamed and hoped it would be. We thought it would be a lifetime together, Barbara, but I have learned it will be better for you, better for me, apart."

"Apart?" she echoed, striking her hands together and letting them fall heavily to his knee.

"What do you mean, Roy?"

"I mean we are not suited for each other; not as we should be to spend a life together."

You understand, Barbara?"

He looked earnestly, yet kindly at her.

Her eyes were shining with a fearful fire. Her bosom rose and fell in irregular billows; and she clasped and unclasped her hands in nervous agitation.

"Yes."

That was all she said, but he heard how husky her voice was.

"There is another reason as well, Barbara, why I feel compelled to speak thus plainly."

Can you surmise it?"

"You love another?"

Her voice continued husky and low, but there seemed a suffocating agony in her words as they fell from the red lips that neither quivered or faltered.

Roy's face brightened. After all, she must have discovered his love for Blanche.

"Barbara, you have spoken it. I love another, and beg you to release me from my vows to you."

"Who is this other?"

He patted the way for the answer; yet he spoke it, bravely.

"If I wound you, Barbara, I beg your pardon; but I must tell you she is Mrs. De Laurian."

She started as if stung by a hornet. Her face paled, her eyes seemed starting from her head; with outstretched arms and motionless form she stood, bearing the first keen agony of a second rejected love.

"Blanche!" she repeated, in a strange, far-away tone, then bowed her pale face to her hands.

"Barbara, you suffer so? I am not worth it, indeed I am not. Do forgive me, Barbara." He touched her hair with his pitying fingers, but she sprang like a tigress from under it, and recoiled in contemptuous wrath.

"Never, never, so help me all the powers of Hades! Forgive you, poor, weak, pitiful fool? Never, while life lasts and memory can perform her office, or revenge do her work!"

She stood aloof from him, as if his touch were contamination. Desperate, enraged, mortified that it was not the first time she had been cast aside, and both times for the same woman!

"Go, Mr. Davenal, and remember I swear to settle this account between us. I swear to

make you rue this day, the hour when you dared set aside the love of Barbara Lester!"

And she swept past him like some destructive tempest.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 158.)

The Beautiful Forger:

OR,

THE ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG GIRL.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLETT.

AUTHOR OF "MADEIRA'S MARRIAGE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE OLD WITCH'S LAIR.

THE old woman of the log cabin busied herself in setting out a comfortable meal for her tired guests, and had the satisfaction of seeing them eat and seem refreshed. She then spread thick comforters on a mattress of straw in one corner, opposite the bed she occupied with her grandchild. She would have had the girls retire as soon as supper was over; but Helen begged Louise to tell her all that had happened. She must know the perils that surrounded them. Many expressions of earnest sympathy interrupted the narrative. At its close, Helen asked, anxiously:

"Do you think we can be safe here?"

"I should think so," was the hesitating answer. "The man who attacked you was wounded; he could not follow you."

"I am not sure of that," said Louise. "I struck as deep as I could, but I'm sure he was not much hurt; still, he was losing blood, and would have to bind up the wound before he could come after us."

"When he does come," added Helen, with a shudder, "he will be more fierce than ever, for he will want to be revenged."

"Very true; but I do not see what he can do against so many of us, even if he finds out you are here."

The poor girl was ready to shriek as the possibility was suggested. "Have you neighbors near?" she asked, trembling.

"Old Milo, the herdsman, and his wife and son, live at the bottom of the hill. But the youngster is off with his team just now."

"And the others will help us in case we are attacked?"

"That they will; they are used to fighting the Indians. They have been smoked out five or six times."

and lifted up two of the boards of the floor. A short ladder went down into a pit that seemed to be dry; it was thickly floored with fresh straw, and was some eight or nine feet square. "Here is a snug chamber," said the dame, laughing; "dry and warm, I can tell you, for I have used it for barrels of flour and vegetables. You will find flour in the corner yet. If you are afraid, I can put you down here and draw the boards over you. Nobody knows of this but myself and Eunice."

They retired early that night, and the two young girls, as well as little Eunice, were soon buried in slumber. The old woman was restless. In spite of the encouragement by which she kept up the spirits of her guests, her own fears were awake. She did not like the story of the man questioning the child. She let the kitchen fire burn low, the logs smoldering in the ashes, and put up boards before the windows. She listened long and anxiously for noises without; but all was silent and dark. Then she lay down without undressing, and gradually lost herself in sleep.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE HALF-BREED'S STOLE.

SEVERAL hours must have passed, for the dame felt refreshed, as by a full night's rest, when she started up all at once wide awake. She had dreamed, or fancied she heard, something to frighten her, but she was cautious not to awake her young companions.

She rose and went to the window looking on the road, applying her ear to the narrow crevice between the boards. After some minutes she distinctly heard footsteps. They came nearer and nearer; they were evidently stealthy. They stopped just before the door, then seemed to go round the house. The dame stole to the door that opened into the garden. Again she heard the footsteps move audibly now as they rustled among the dried weeds. Then a careful hand was laid on the latch, and an effort was made to open the door softly.

Convinced now that marauders were upon them, the dame hastily awakened the girls, whispering to them to dress as quickly as possible. From the window next the road she now heard other footsteps, and could see the gleam of a lantern among the bushes. The trembling girls, who had put on their dresses, clung to her in deadly fear, and proposed that they should all escape through the garden to the hut of their neighbor.

"It will be of no use," she answered. "You would only run into danger. They are all around the house."

"They!" exclaimed Helen. "Is there more than one?"

"Ten of 'em at least. You can hear for yourselves."

The sound of many footsteps could indeed be heard. Presently a bold rap came upon the door.

"What shall we do?" whispered the terrified Helen. "Shall we ask their protection? They can not all be Urie's friends."

"Do as I bid ye," responded the old woman. "It is me they come for. They have been threatening me ever since Giuseppe's brindle cow went mad, and Gramo's pigs were drowned. They will have it that I bewitched 'em. The end must come, sooner or later; and 'tis as well not to live in fear. Take up the child."

Louise had lifted the little girl in her arms, and wrapped her clothes about her.

"Now you three must hide."

She strode into the chamber, drew aside the heavy bedstead, and lifted the boards that covered the pit. All this time raps were heard at the door, with intervals of silence.

Louise stepped back, that Helen might go down first. The dame clutched her arm.

"You must promise me one thing," she whispered, in a solemn and emphatic manner. "They may kill me. You must promise to take care of Eunice."

"I promise!" Helen eagerly replied. "She shall be like my own child, or my little sister!"

She clasped the child in her arms. "Go, then, and luck go with you! You dare not break your word," said the grandmother. "I trust you. Quick; they will break down the door!"

She pushed Louise after the others, flung down a coverlet from the bed, and hurriedly replaced the boards and the bedstead.

There was now impatient beating at the door, and clamorous voices demanding admittance.

"Wait a minute—will ye?" the dame called, while she raked out a coal from the ashes, and lighted a candle. Then she went and unbolted the door.

Three or four men stood outside, chafed to anger at her delay. They began to abuse her for a stubborn old witch, and ordered her to come along with them to a safer place, where such rubs could be eased.

She declared herself ready to go, though they could produce no warrant for her arrest. Their brutal voices drowned her complaints, as they promised more summary justice on the sorceress than the slow authorities could furnish.

"Let me lock up the cabin," she pleaded. "I don't want thieves here to steal the little I have."

"Much good it will do you, old cat!" was the answer. "If you get your deserts: a drowning in the nearest pond, or a swing on the first gallows, that is what you ought to have!"

"Stop!" exclaimed a voice, as they were leading away the old woman, and the man who held the lantern, giving it to some one else, strode forward. "There are more of them in the cabin!"

He stepped in, then, called for the lantern. It was brought to him, and he searched the hut. No one was seen.

"Let us be gone!" said another of the men. "It will be daylight presently."

"Where are the two girls you had with you, old witch?" the other demanded. The dame looked at him defiantly, and kept silence.

"Do you want me to throttle you?" he asked, menacingly.

"You can do as you choose," she answered.

"Tell me, where are those girls? You need not deny that they were here with you. I saw them myself—both of them."

"I shall tell you nothing about them. You can make chase if you like, or they may reach the village, and escape you."

"They have not left the hut. Here, one of you, hold the lantern while I look around."

He threw open the doors of pantry and closet; searched every corner, then began sounding the log walls and the floor. It was not long before he uttered a cry of discovery. He had found the loose board under the bed.

A diversion had been effected outside by the appearance of old Milo, with his gun, to the rescue. But he was presently overpowered, and his weapon taken from him.

Meanwhile the half-breed, Urie—for it was he—had called for assistance to secure the young captives. They were dragged one by one from the hiding-place they had fancied so secure. The voices of old Milo and the dame were heard remonstrating against the molestation of two innocent travelers, who had but sought refuge from the persecutions of the villain who now tried to recapture them.

"They are witches, too!" the half-breed

roared, lustily. "I can prove it! Witches of the worst sort—taking the form of pretty young girls! And here is the lump, the familiar of the old witch! Tie them fast; gag them, if they will not hold their tongues; and let us get away. Bind and gag that howling old fellow and leave him in the cabin. He is bewitched; that is what ails him!"

His orders were quickly obeyed. Where the superstitious fears or the rage of ignorant men can be appealed to, they will acquiesce in the most brutal deeds; and Urie had spent the preceding day in stirring up the vindictive passions of men who believed they had suffered in person or property from the supposed sorceries.

Before the first faint gleams were seen in the eastern sky, the men, with their helpless captives, were on the way to the place selected for their imprisonment.

The poor old man, fast bound and gagged, was left lying on the puncheon floor, and the cabin was fastened up.

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE YOUNG KNIGHT'S RUSE.

As we have mentioned, young Walter Ormsley was not long in tracing Helen. The dame of the Stone Castle was as good as her word; in a few hours she sent a note by a messenger to inform the lover whither the captive had been conveyed.

He went immediately to Sloman's house, and was there completely deceived by the apparent sincerity of the lady; though he did not believe for a moment that the carriage sent for her came from his father's house. He rather suspected Queredos of the contrivance to get her again into his power, and rode back in all haste to enforce his demand on the outlaw, whom the wound he had given still kept in his bed.

Walter saw his wife once more. Her assurances that no one had been sent for the girl only half convinced him; she might have been taken elsewhere, he thought; and with eager anxiety, he again invoked the aid of the authorities, and set men searching in every direction.

They found the bloody stiletto in the wood, and the rope, with traces of a conflict; and noticed, too, that the carriage-tracks went no further. If brought here, she had been taken back, or killed with the weapon picked up and buried in the woods.

The anguish of the unhappy young man moved the sympathies of the neighbors. At this time he was joined by Stephen, who had been sent from home to help his young master, as soon as they had received his message.

Steve was of opinion that the outlaw chief would not dare tempt the vengeance of the community by further persecution of the girl, now that the authorities were on the look-out. Some one else had practiced the deception upon her; and who could it be but that desperate villain, the half-breed, Urie Boyce?

"And I heard of the fellow having crossed the river, only night before last," Steve added.

"With whom?"

"Alone, but in a great hurry, and sore with a stab in the shoulder; so the Indian told me," said the man. "What more likely than that he got the hurt by attacking the wagon, from Miss Helen's driver?"

"Do you know which way he went?"

"To Ongar, I should think; the ferry is on the road."

"Then let us go directly."

It was late in the afternoon; but they hurried on. The man who owned the boat confirmed the story of Urie's having crossed. The half-breed could not be easily forgotten by any one who had seen him; and the description was easily recognized.

The minutes seemed hours till Walter and his faithful attendant were on the other side of the stream, and on the way to the village of Ongar. Arrived there, it was necessary to use caution in making inquiries, and Steve took the lead.

They ascertained that Urie Boyce had his quarters in the small tavern. This they visited after dusk. Steve was ordered to watch outside, while Walter, trusting to the disguise of his fur cap and collar and the dim light, resolved to encounter the enemy.

He assumed a swaggering gait as he entered the tavern, ordered a glass of punch, and advanced to the dining-room. The landlord intimated, saying that the room was occupied by a private party; but it was too late. Walter flung the door wide open, and saw the man of whom he was in search, seated at supper, having just finished some talk with one of the hands about the tavern, who went out at once.

Walter noted the man who went out, and then came forward with a bow and an apology to the "gentleman" for his intrusion; throwing himself into a chair at the other end of the table, and heartily inviting the half-breed to take share of the punch that was coming.

Urie seemed disposed to be huffy at the approaches of a stranger, and declined the invitation with a grant.

"Better change your mind, stranger," cried the young man, affecting the boisterous good-fellowship of a *bonnier*, as he received the hot punch, and ordered a couple of glasses.

Just at that moment the man who had been speaking with Urie, came back and whispered to him.

"One will do for me," the answer was; "but he must be of the best blood. See to that. I shall ride fast."

The man went out.

Again, with a hilarious laugh, the youth lifted his glass, and called out:

"You had better drink, comrade! Come, success to your undertaking!"

Urie turned and looked at him scrutinizingly. The air of foolish confidence and love of good cheer assumed by the young stranger completely deceived him.

"I will drink with you!" he said, drawing his chair nearer, and taking the full glass offered him.

"And success to our enterprise, as you say. Have you a mind to share in it?"

"With all my heart!" replied Walter.

"Well, you shall. Some of the stupid people in the settlement captured last night three or four women, and dragged them to a barn a mile or so distant, where they have been kept prisoners all day. The folks will live it they are witches."

"Yes—all of them. The oldest—a withered old thing—has had the character some time, and been marked out for vengeance by many who have suffered by her."

"And she is really a witch?" asked the young man, with mouth agape—remembering his assumed character. "I want to see a witch so much. Will she ride on a broomstick through the air?"

"I don't know. You shall see her if you lend a hand to my work. I want help."

"What is to be done? I'm your man."

"Well, you just follow me, and do as I bid you. As I told you, the women are safe in the barn; but the *alcide* has heard that something is up, and has ordered the men who captured the witches to be arrested if they can be found. Nobody will stir in the matter to-night."

"But we will be ahead of the *alcide*, eh?" queried the youth, smiling.

"We must be. Some of the men who have

lost their cattle and fowls are determined to burn the witches out to-night."

"To burn—?"

"Yes—to set fire to the barn where they are tied up."

"And you—?"

All Walter's self-control could not prevent his drawing his breath with a gasp—for some powerful intuition told him Helen had part in this danger.

"Don't be scared, youngster. I am going in for a rescue. I shall be a few minutes ahead of the rioters; I shall get into the barn, cut their bonds, and get them out. You can help me."

"How, sir?"

"By dealing with the sentry, while I set the women loose."

"But how will they get out of danger?"

"I shall take one on horseback with me and ride off. The others must use their legs to escape."

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to take them to the *alcide*, and claim his protection?"

"I don't care what they do. But I don't want the matter breathed on till we have got them clear; for that reason I want help from a stranger. Will you go in with me?"

"With all my might. How soon do we start?"

The conspirators have appointed midnight for the burning. We shall be there fifteen minutes before."

"Why not now?"

"Because the rioters are scattered about the village, and we should find it hard to get away without their seeing us. Wait till they are assembled, and on the way; then they can not give us chase."

"You will have a horse to carry double?"

"Ay, for I shall have far to ride with the girl."

"The witches are girls, then?" asked the young man, innocently. "The worst sort are the three I have heard of."

"One is an old woman; two are younger, and one is a child."

"Well, captain, you just give me your orders, and I will stand to them," said the youth.

"Unless you will let me go over first and keep watch for you."

"No, you shall not do that. You could not find the place without me."

Walter felt that to be true. He no longer entertained a doubt that Helen was one of the prisoners, but he dared ask no further questions, lest his motives might be suspected.

Urie ordered his new ally to stay about the tavern till the time for starting, adding that he himself should not go out, for fear of being seen by one of the rioters.

After they had finished their punch, Walter proposed a smoke in the veranda. To this his companion agreed. The young man, while enjoying his cigar, paced up and down, looking out into the darkness at either end of the building, to catch a glimpse of Steve, with whom it was now important that he should communicate.

It was a sore trial for him to rein in his ardent feelings, now that he was so near success. More than an hour had passed, and Urie had stepped into the house for a moment, when Ormsley saw a dark figure issue from the deeper shadow of some trees at the end of the veranda. Quick as thought he made a gesture of caution and ran to the spot.

"Steve?" he whispered.

"Ay, master Walter."

"Go round to the dining-room window, and I will come presently."

The man disappeared just as the dreaded half-breed appeared again at the door.

Walter offered him a fresh cigar, which he took and lighted.

"I have more in my overcoat pocket," said the young man. "I left it within."

He went into the dining-room, where he had thrown off his coat, retaining his cap. Steve was at the window.

A moment sufficed to give him directions. He was to follow at a distance and have his two horses in readiness not far from the barn. In case of accident, he was to give the alarm and have pursuit made. But Walter preferred, if possible, to rescue his lady-love and bear her away from danger, to the slow process of an investigation in the village. Steve promised strict compliance with his directions.

He could not linger a moment, for fear of incurring the suspicion of the villain he meant to outwit.

All was dark and silent in the rancheria when young Ormsley set out with Urie to walk to the barn of which he had spoken. Boyce had ordered his horse fastened in a cluster of trees by the roadside near the barn, but out of sight, should the conspirators come that way. He pointed out the old frame building looming up against the dark sky, as they approached it after half an hour's brisk walk.

"Keep close to me," whispered the half-breed. "I may want your help to secure the girl I mean to save and carry off."

"Then she will not go with you willingly?"

"The youth's mental comment, 'even to escape death!'"

He had a wild idea of suddenly throttling his companion, and then rushing to snatch his darling from peril. But a glance at the robust frame of the man beside him, and the thought of the burly sentinel left to guard the prisoners, convinced him there would be danger of failure in the rash attempt.

"And then, what would become of my dear girl?" he thought.

They had now got so near that they could distinctly see the outline of a man seated on a log close to the corner of the old frame barn.

"He must be managed," whispered Urie.

"I leave him to you; that is what I brought you for. You can surprise him, and I will help you tie his arms."

He produced a stout rope. The man at the door was whistling a tune, unsuspecting of danger near. Presently he threw his head back as if composing himself to sleep.

"Now—now's your time!" whispered the half-breed.

But before the young man could spring upon his unsuspecting foe, a clutch was laid upon his arm, and a prolonged gasp from Urie told him that something had fallen out to overturn his plans.

"Listen!" he whispered, hoarsely.

There was a tramping at a short distance as of many feet on the ground; a confused murmur, half-suppressed, of human voices!

Even while they listened, the noise came closer and closer, and a score of dusky forms were beside them.

In the faint starlight Walter could see that the men were armed with clubs. One carried a lantern. A formidable array of rioters, come to the attack on a few helpless women already their prisoners!

"We are too late!" muttered Urie, with a disheartened growl. "I must speak to them. Hold on; wait for me!"

He strode on, encountering the advancing rioters; he waved his hands. They burst into a gruff shout of welcome at sight of him; and young Ormsley at once perceived that it was he who had incited them to the act of lawless violence.

He began by lauding their energy and earnestness in the good cause. But he reminded them that they were nearly half an hour before the time appointed.

"Very true," responded one of the men; "but we want it over. The light will not be seen. Come on there!"

The man with the lantern advanced. He held in his hand a bundle of dry sticks and shavings, which he put down beside the barn, and arranged preparing to set fire to the pile.

"Stop that!" shouted Urie. "Too much risk! We shall have the constables down on us. No firing, no burning! Give me a hatchet."

He took a hatchet from one of the men, and commenced hacking at the huge door of the barn.

Shouts from various eager questioners demanded what he meant. The rioters would not be cheated of their prey! Nothing but fire could destroy witches!

Walter had torn another hatchet from the grasp of one of the men, and was splitting the boards of the door.

There was a wild uproar among the rioters, and a running to and fro.

They were not at all pleased with the interference that threatened to balk their savage vengeance. Urie had raised the storm in appealing to their mad passions; he was now to reap the whirlwind.

He strove to allay the tempest; he declared his intention to bring out the prisoners and make them walk out plowshares; he called on the men to sing hymns by way of counteracting incantations, while he went in to complete the work so well begun.

He was answered by cries and execrations. He was resolved, as soon as the door could be forced, to save Helen and carry her off, leaving the others to their fate.

While the rioters were wrangling and clamoring—some shouting for the key which could not be found, and some roaring that the barn should be fired—young Ormsley was vigorously demolishing the door. He heard the screams of women in the interior answering the shouts of their brutal persecutors. At last he succeeded in forcing an entrance, at the same time with some one else.

The other one was Urie, and he lost no time in cutting the prisoners' bonds.

"You can make your escape now," he called to them in hoarse whisper. "Helen, I have come to save you!"

"I will not go with you!" answered a voice which thrilled to Walter's inmost soul. "Let go my arm! I will perish in the flames first!"

The red light flickered through the crevices between the boards on the other side, and wild cries burst from the rioters. They had fired the barn!

As the gleam flashed up, Walter caught sight of Helen, pale and scared, her hair floating back, struggling in the grasp of her cruel enemy. The next instant all was dark again.

"Helen! Helen!" Walter shouted, in mad anxiety. "This way! I am here to save you!"

"Oh, Walter! Walter!" he heard a voice cry. He rushed toward it, and clasped a light form in his arms.

"Go with him! Go with him!" cried the old dame. "Eunice, cling to me. We will escape, or die together, my child."

Amid the wild yells of the rioters, the crackling of the rising flames, and the rain of blows aimed at random, the prisoners were dragged out of the barn.

Their enemies were on the other side, and the shadows were the blacker for the lurid light in one spot, so that they could not yet be seen in the obscurity.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 155.)

Rocky Mountain Rob,

THE CALIFORNIA OUTLAW;

OR,

The Vigilantes of Humbug Bar.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "THE WOLF DEMON," "OVERLAND KIT," "RED MAZEPPA," "FACE OF SPADES," "HEART OF THE WITCHES OF NEW YORK," "A STRANGE GIRL," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MORE EVIDENCE.

VAINLY the lawyer struggled in the miners' grasp.

"Take him out and duck him in the river. We'll show him whether we're a court or not," the colonel said, with a grim sort of humor, which tickled the fancy of the miners.

And out into the open air and down into the gulch went the lawyer, despite his threats and prayers.

He emerged from the water on the other bank and took to his heels, and ran as if he expected an instant pursuit.

Anxious to keep up the joke, the miners sent half a dozen shots after him, which served to increase his speed. Then they returned to the court-room.

Talbot gave his evidence, which was simply a recital of his adventures the previous night, tracking York and Kangaroo to the cave of the outlaws, and then following the band of masked robbers on their raid on the Chinese Camp.

"What does all this prove?" cried York, indignantly, when Talbot had finished. York had listened with ill-suppressed passion to Dick's words. "Judge, I claim a fair trial. I want the clear white thing. I don't want to be hung on the word of a brute Indian and a heathen Chinese. This man, Talbot, can't prove anything against me. He says that he saw me go out of the Chinaman's shanty; that Kangaroo, here, and Rackensack were with me, and then, that he came out, saw us talking on the other side of the way, and then followed Kangaroo and myself to the mountains. How can he tell who he followed? He don't dare to say that he recognized either of us in the darkness," and York turned and faced Talbot defiantly as he spoke.

"Judge, I know that the two men I followed were these two, because the Indian followed the other man, and he turned out to be Rackensack," Talbot said.

"Mighty good evidence that is to hang a man on!" York cried, sarcastically. "He knew that I was one of the men that he followed, and whom he didn't know anything about except what that lying Indian says, was Bill Rackensack. You see, Judge, it all comes right down to what that Indian says. He's the framework of the whole shanty. Tumble his evidence down, and what is there left? It's just as plain as the sun at noonday! This man, Talbot, has got a grudge against me; so has the Indian, and they've trumped up this charge between them so as to get even with me. They didn't dare, either one of them, to give me a fair show for a fight like a man. No, they're afraid to do that; but they come behind my back and strike me with an accusation like this. They're just using you, Judge."

The colonel listened attentively and made no effort to interrupt York, but after he had finished, thus spoke:

"York, you have used a good many words, but you haven't given us much evidence. Disprove the charges that these men make against you. The evidence against you

MY UNCLE JAKE.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

My old, eccentric uncle Jake!
At thought of him what memories wake!
I seem to see him now
Though I was young when he was old,
He had a soul of warmest mold,
And quite a frosty pow.

A very jolly man was he,
As every man could be,
Could laugh and have his jokes,
Could kiss the girls and pinch the boys;
It did you good to hear his voice,
Or see him sit and smoke.

He once had wed. He used to say
The question, "How and why?"
I answered by mistake:
This little piece of thoughtlessness
Brought much hysterical distress
Into your uncle Jake.

Friends and physicians could not save
My uncle Jake from looking grave
When this he would recall:
But then, he'd wink an eye at me,
And "Make a note of this," said he,
"Nor write it very small."

His hearing by and by got bad,
While I was still a little lad;
It always made me loose
To tell him it was time for tea—
Yelling all the while in me,
And shaking him with force.

Then he'd look up, "Why, I'll be bound
It's master Joseph! Come around
And try this other ear."
I fear my hearing, once so fine,
May be beginning to decline—
Come, whisper louder, dear."

His hearing got so very small
That soon he couldn't hear at all.
"It seems to me," he'd say,
"The world of late has grown more quiet,
There isn't half the noise and riot
That was in my young day."

We passed the fort one day at noon;
We saw them fire the midday gun
Of fifteen inches bore:
"What won't be next?" said he; "I'll swear,
They've got to making cannon now
That go without a roar!"

Poor uncle Jake has passed away;
To him, until my own head's gray,
My mind shall oft return.
I lately wandered by his tomb,
Wherein he waits the trump of doom—
For which I've some concern.

Just Saved.

A STORY OF A WOMAN'S HATE.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

AUSTINE CRAIGSTONE sat beside the open window, through which came in the summer wind, laden with perfumy breaths. Her fair, shapely hands lay idly upon an unfolded letter, and she seemed as if she were thinking very intently upon what it contained. And it must have been a strange mixture of gratification and discontent the letter gave her if one judged by the flash of triumph in her eyes, then by the sneering curl of anger and contempt on her lips. And in very truth Austine Craigstone was stirred to the depths of her scheming soul by that innocent missive that she had torn open with such feverish haste, and found it contained just what she wanted it to contain, just what she feared it might possibly not contain.

An invitation to her younger sister's elegant home, for a month, seconded by her sister's husband—Warne Datur—that was all it was; and yet Austine's fingers clenched the letter till she drove the filbert-shaped nails into the quivering palm; and even then the pain was bliss compared to the mad whirlwind of agony that was tearing over her heart. It was simply this—and Austine's face darkened as she recalled it—all. Warne Datur, this elegant, courtly man, who had married her sister Lillian, had once—before Lillian, in her winsome, sunshiny way, crossed his path—been Austine's own betrothed, whom she had loved with all the wild, fierce passion of a heart so fiery as hers was; for whose sake she had dreamed sweetest dreams of the day when she should be mistress of his magnificent home, and share his wealth, and bear his name.

She was terribly proud and ambitious, this Austine Craigstone, and when the blow fell, and she knew Lillian had usurped her place, it stunned her with its suddenness into the very silence and lethargy that was the best aid to the lovers to assist their plans of a speedy marriage.

So Austine, poor, proud, vengeful, was left to try over again her chances for a brilliant marriage. So, scarce knowing whether it were love or hatred she entertained for Warne Datur, so curiously and awfully were the two emotions blended, Austine went away from old friends, old associations, that kept everlastingly reminding her of it all.

Away to an old aunt's of her father, in a shady, quiet farmhouse, where the honeysuckle climbed and peeped in all the windows, and the buckwheat fields waved and whitened all around them. A sweet, restful place, that should have quieted the eternal turmoil in her heart; a peaceful spot where had come to her a gift whose acceptance of it would have made her past life a soft penitence, her future a bright hope—the love that John Hunter had offered her; the love her beautiful face had inspired in a man whose first love-story was read to Austine Craigstone.

He was one of "Nature's noblemen," grave, dignified, somewhat taciturn; so kind, so unselfish, so thoroughly the gentleman; and all this perfect manhood had laid itself with its own peculiarly proud humility, at Austine Craigstone's feet, at the feet of this woman who loved her sister's husband; this beautiful woman who would not reach forth her hand to take the good the gods offered, but who desperately clung to that other false promise, like chimera of music, sounded continually in her soul.

Yes, she would go to her sister's house—to Warne Datur's house, that which would have been hers with all its elegancies, had it not been for Lillian Craigstone's face. Austine hated her more than any of them; for the time, she verily believed she despised John Hunter when she compared him with Warne Datur.

Yes, she would go; and if there was left a trace of her influence over him, she would use it over Warne Datur, be consequences what they might.

And there never was a trembling of the fingers as Austine answered her sister's letter; there was never a qualm of conscience as to "consequences," or a fearful looking to what might result.

No reproaching, haunting memory of winsome Lillian in her wifely security, or of John Hunter, who dreamed she was little less than an angel; to whom he had given his all; of whom he would receive—what? apples of ashes?

And Austine? With a radiance in her eyes that made their violet depths seem fathomless, and a quiet grace in all her movements that strangely belied the wild elation in her heart, went about her few preparations—made ready her few but skillful weapons that she would

remorselessly use to murder what happiness lay between her and—Warne Datur.

"Wrong? Why don't you use the correct words and call it outrageous, wicked? She is beautiful as a dream, isn't she, in that sea-green tulle?"

"And Mr. Datur appreciates his charming sister-in-law highly. I wonder how Mrs. D. enjoys this flirtation of his, that's the current gossip, and has been since Miss Craigstone arrived?"

They didn't know they had a listener, these gentlemen who stood idly watching the dancers in Mr. Datur's grand saloon, but almost exactly behind them, and almost screened by a fall of light-green silk and white lace, poor little Lillian Datur was sitting all alone, on a low green silken cushion.

Ah! did she enjoy Warne's "flirtation" with Austine? Wasn't it wearing the bloom off her cheeks and burying her happiness deeper every day?

She was not blind to it; she was not a child to be humored into the specious belief that it was a flirtation; for, in her inmost soul, Lillian Datur believed her sister Austine was a reckless woman, who would not scruple to trample on a human heart, or a human happiness, if it lifted her a step nearer the high pinnacle she had set herself to reach.

It had been a month now since Austine had come to them; a month only, and measuring the time by the absence of Warne's attention to her, it seemed a year since he had caressed her, petted her in his dear, old way; judging the time by the advance Warne had made in Austine's good graces, by the strength of their intimacy, it seemed only yesterday that she had come among them.

Yes, Austine was "beautiful as a dream," Lillian thought, as she peered from the curtains at the two—Warne and her sister—as they slowly and perfectly kept time to one of Strauss' waltzes. She could see Austine's sweet face, flushed like a pink sea-shell; she could see the languishing drooping of the blue-veined lids over the dark eyes; the slightly parted lips, red as a pomegranate, and the glimpse of pearls within them.

Was it right?—not that her husband should waltz so rapidly with Austine, but that she, the wife, the sister, should sit in such jealous espionage upon them? And her woman's heart, with unerring instinct, told her it was right.

Austine had no business there longer, and she would tell her so. Then, when her beauty was gone from his eyes, she would go to Warne, and tell him it all; and they would make it all up, and be so happy again.

And the while, out yonder on the dancing floor, where Austine and Warne had exchanged the waltz for the Lancers, she was doing her work.

"You will not forget our walk at moonrise? Remember, I am so anxious to see the springs by the moonlight, and I am going home so soon."

"As if I would be likely to forget, Austine! but you are not going home—we can't spare you for at least a month to come. Why, Austine, the hotel yonder is only beginning to fill up these last warm days; the good times are hardly yet inaugurated."

An odd little smile curled her lips, and she just glanced up at his handsome face—it was one of those looks she gave him that made people declare this flirtation "outrageous, wicked."

"Why, Warne, is it possible you think I care for the attractions outside your house? If you knew how awfully lonely I shall be when I get back to aunt Mira's, you'd pity me."

"Do not go, Austine," he said, and just then they clasped hands for "forward two."

"How can I stay?" she whispered, lowly. "Do you not see how Lillian—"

The crash of the music for the grand chain effectually broke up their conversation; and Warne only had time to murmur "Moonrise, to-night," as they met and bowed.

And then Austine felt a wild song of triumph in her heart, that was surging so restlessly for the love of him.

"Mrs. Datur! can it be possible I have so delightedly and unexpectedly met an old friend?"

Mr. Hunter extended his hand to Lillian, who had had gone to meet him.

"It is really I, and so glad to see you. You are at the hotel? Then I shall send Peter for your luggage, and keep you with us. Mr. Datur will be so glad to know you."

And so the fates brought it to pass that Austine Craigstone's lover came to be a visitor at Warne Datur's house.

They had gone, per appointment, at moonrise to the Springs, a few minutes only before John Hunter had met Lillian as she rode by him in her little pony phaeton, alone, as she was always since Austine had come.

"Let me drive you home with me, Mr. Hunter, please; we may find my husband and Austine when we get there. I can not take 'no.'"

He laughed at her earnestness, as he sprang in and took the reins from her. "Austine," Mrs. Datur. It is odd, and very musical, never knew but one 'Austine.' She is very precious to me."

Lillian looked at him quickly. There was a tender light in his eyes that lingered even after he spoke.

"In our family it is common; it is the feminine for Austine. My sister is Austine—Miss Craigstone."

"Is it possible? Austine your sister, Mrs. Datur? I wonder if you may congratulate me?"

He spoke hurriedly, impulsively, two rare conditions of speech for John Hunter; and Lillian, who knew him so well, knew what a hold her sister had taken of this man's affections.

And Austine was not worthy; Lillian felt that; and so, when she lifted her face to Austine's lover, he wondered why it was so sad—why her eyes seemed full of unshed tears. Did it mean he was rejected?

Ah, if it had meant no more than that! But he could not take his answer from Austine's sister; and she would not tell him what grieved her so sorely; and so they rode on, in swift quietude.

"This road leads to our only showplace, Mr. Hunter. Would you like to see Sylvan Spring by moonlight? It will repay you your trouble, I think."

And so he turned the ponies' heads, and drove on to his fate.

At the rustic gate they alighted and tread softly on the turf grass, with the distant murmurs of some hidden voices coming now and then to their ears.

Lillian grasped his arm, and laid her finger on her white lips to enjoin silence.

And then they heard the sweet voice of Austine Craigstone.

"But, Warne, you will not send me back? Oh, keep me always where you are, Warne, for I can not forget!"

"We should forget and forgive, Austine. For Lillian's sake—"

Her voice interrupted him, sharp and shrill in its low madness.

"Warne, she has come between us, and I can

not bear it! Oh, my darling, let it be her who goes and I who stays!"

They heard a quick step, and an exclamation of utter horror.

My God—what do you dare to suggest? I thank Him my eyes are opened.

And never heeding her pitiful call, Warne walked—into his wife's arms.

John Hunter looked on, his grand face stony with the unutterable anguish of his soul; and then, by a great effort of will, he quietly went forward to meet Austine Craigstone.

"It is over between us forever."

He thrust the words at her almost fiercely; she gave a cry of fright and alarm, mingled with keenest shame and amazement, and then, when John Hunter had turned to rejoin Warne and Lillian, she fled away up the dusky forest path as if a thousand avengers were on her track.

Only a little later, while husband and wife were settling their first and only difference, and Mr. Hunter paced the piazza in terrible quietude of spirit, there came up a sudden, heavy shower, with awful flashes of red-gold lightning, and reverberating echoes of intense thunder sounds.

And, a little later still, they brought her home, pale and dead, with a blue ring marking the fatal path of the lightning as it circled her shapely throat.

I say, "Just Saved." Is it not so? Even if she was sacrificed, who would have sacrificed all the love of John Hunter's heart, all the human happiness of her sister, Lillian, for the sake of Warne Datur's love?

So, they three were "just saved." And of Austine—there may have been mercy reserved.

It Might Have Been.

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

It was an October day.

Not a bright, glowing, glorious October day, when hazy purple mists roll off in the distance, and dreamy sunshine starts the foliage into its most vivid tints of red, and yellow, and rich browns—but a drizzling, dreary, chilly autumn day, with an east wind blowing the smoke down all the chimneys where fires sputtered and struggled feebly, giving out very little of either cheer or warmth.

Algernon Howe looked glumly disconsolate. The monotonous drops trickled down the panes, the long, cool parlor which had been his favorite in the summer-time, but now was quite too suggestive of future discomfort in its airiness, its checked matting and white linen shades, the faint, flickering blue flame on the hearth, were certainly enough to excise his very evident depression. It was preposterous—this idea of dragging the season to such an extreme limit over here in this dreary, deserted country region. Deserted?—no, not quite. For it was Katrine Daly's whim to lengthen out the weeks here in this seclusion, and it was dancing attendance upon Katrine Daly's will which was keeping Algernon Howe in this sequestered spot, which was any thing but in accordance with his tastes.

"Confoundedly vexatious!" soliloquized Mr. Howe, with a half-growl. "I wish I could give her the benefit of my sentiments. I've heard of woman's perversity before now, but I never had to do with another such obstinate piece—never in all my life, and I've had a pretty extensive experience with the feminine article. It's bound to pay, that's certain. She's just the sort of a girl to be taken easily, but so deucedly exacting and full of preposterous notions. Well, my lady is having her day, and I can afford to wait for my time to come. She'll know the difference then—no more such exclusive attention, such constant solicitude, such abominable racing into absurdities to suit her whims. Men may be slaves before marriage, but they're masters afterward as a rule, and our case shall not prove an exception to it. Heigho! if it were Lulu now—but there's the deuce of it! Lulu's just the sort of a sweet, yielding little thing, the girl of all girls I ever loved, or cared for, or not in the least odd, or loud, or capricious—she can't help it. I'll aver that the Daly is all of these. And yet—and yet, I shall marry the one that I'd heartily detest if it weren't for her—circumstances, and break the little one's heart, like as not, by being unfaithful to her. That's the way all the world over, and there's no use grumbling at fate. A fellow's really obliged to marry rich nowadays, and I'll have to sacrifice myself along with all the others that do it. What would the charming Katrine say if she knew what a sacrifice it is, I wonder? It's another case illustrated by that boy who had money and no pocket-book to put it—bought a pocket-book, and then had no money to keep in it. I love Lulu and I can't marry her, and I'll marry Katrine without caring two straws for her. It's fortunate she said yes so willingly; I'd have given up the struggle in disgust if it had been harder to win. It would be awkward now if she should get a hint of affairs as they stand—to be the fiancée of two expectant damsels, and the wedding-day set with both of 'em, is rather a ticklish predicament. I'd ought to have broken with Lulu before this, but somehow I haven't any idea Katrine would be willing to rush matters so. I'll do this very day, though—it's not safe to put it off, with the chance of a row at the last."

A pair of metallic high-heels clattered down the stairway at that, the door flew back with a breezy rush, and Miss Daly herself appeared in the abrupt and noisy fashion which was a continual trial to her accepted lover.

"You most lugubrious mortal! What are you glowering out of that window at? Come here and practice this sonata with me. Don't you know I've been moped to death all the morning, and you isolating yourself in this unconscionable manner? To do penance you shall go horseback-riding around the lake with me this afternoon."

"In this rain, Katrine?"

"In this rain! Where are your eyes and your senses, mon ami? The rain has almost ceased and the clouds are breaking away. See, there's the first rift of sunshine."

"Emblematic, isn't it, my darling? Like the sunshine of your love breaking into the monotony of my life."

Miss Daly was not in general inclined to be sentimental. She was no beauty, this heiress whom Algernon Howe had wooed and won; she was just a healthy, happy-looking girl, with a pale dark skin and luminous gray eyes brimful of vivacious sparkling light. For a wonder, the light softened now, and the laughing face was gravely shaded as she met his glance wistfully.

"And you never loved any one else, Algernon; never any one but me? I'm fearfully capricious and exacting, I know, and I never could endure to be chosen in place of a first love. Never any one else?"

"What a particular little body it is. Never any one else, my own, only sweet."

"But your sunshine is shut out by the clouds again. Oh, I do hope the rain is not beginning again, for I've set my heart on a ride."

It was not beginning again, but there was to be no warmth or sunshine that afternoon. The sky was an unbroken sheet of gray, and that chilly East wind blew the leaves down in clouds from the dismantling forests. Miss Daly thumped at the piano unmercifully, watching the outdoor aspect, and quite unmindful of the agony her lover was enduring under the storm of discord her reckless touch called forth. He dropped his hands over hers at last, as they flew over the white keys, with a face of ludicrously pitiful appeal.

"Katrine, what is the matter with you this morning? I certainly never knew you to play so badly. Do have mercy on a soul to harmony attuned."

She wheeled about so suddenly as to almost take his breath.

"That's just it. 'A soul to harmony attuned,' and it has just come to me, in some inexplicable way, that you and I don't harmonize. I actually believe you'd rebel against me if you only dared. You always act under protest to any wish of mine—and I'm just unreasonable enough not to be satisfied with any thing except the blindest and most unquestioning devotion."

"And you have it from me. I am your slave, your worshiper, your devoted follower. I'm ready to swear fealty—to prove it any way you like."

"How glad I am." Certainly this Miss Daly was an odd creature, for she laughed outright as she sprang up from the music stool. "Then move it at once—order out the horses and I'll be ready in ten minutes."

Mr. Howe ventured upon a mild protest. "I thought you'd given that up, Katrine. It's cool for riding, and the road is slippery—"

"And you are determined to be disobliging. Very well, Mr. Howe, suit yourself. I thought proper to give you the first opportunity, although Duke Norton asked for the pleasure which you evidently consider a bore. I actually flibbed by telling him I was already engaged—true in one sense—but it's not too late to remedy that, I dare say."

Algernon took the alarm and roused himself with unwonted alacrity. Duke Norton would be only too happy to supplant him in more than this horseback ride, as he very well knew.

"I was thinking of your comfort, my dear. Of course I'm at your service entirely and willingly."

"Yes, 'at my service,' and that's all," said Miss Daly to herself as she buttoned on her habit. "I almost imagine I was a simpleton to quarrel with Duke because he said hard things of him. Dear Duke! He was honest to the core. But then Algernon is so handsome, and if he only wasn't so wretchedly submissive—just like a poodle-dog which licks the hand that slaps it. Why can't men have a particle of spirit, I'd like to know?"

Very contradictory, was it not, for Katrine to be finding objection to the very condition she so strenuously imposed? But the truth was she had been deluded into accepting Algernon after a certain lovers' quarrel arising from her unquestionable flirtation with him, in which Duke Norton had been an interested participant. And now her wayward heart was going back to its old allegiance; and had Mr. Howe but known what a straw might set all his calculations adrift, he would have hesitated before writing the long deferred letter to Lulu, which should break their engagement—the first entered upon, the longest in existence. Quite true he was writing it, as he did, hurriedly, while waiting for Katrine, for the day which should make him Lulu's husband had been set just one month hence, and in the six weeks' time since he parted from her, he had become the affianced wife of Katrine Daly. That much for mercenary promptings.

Not ready, Algernon? I thought it was the province of you gentlemen to be kept waiting."

"Quite ready, Katrine." He sealed the envelope and slipped it into his pocket as he spoke, answering her careless glance at it with all the haste of a guilty conscience. "A note to my tailor, my dear. These tradespeople are vexatiously importunate, and, contrary to my custom, I left a bill standing. We'll meet the postman if I am not amiss in my calculations."

To himself he was thinking, "She's inclined to be so deucedly exacting she might press awkward questions if she saw the address."

Katrine was in wild spirits during that ride, somber and gloomy as the day was. They were on their return when she espied the postman in the distance.

"A race, Algernon. Who reaches him first opens all the letters. Is it a bargain?"

He assented smilingly. He had no fear of tell-tale missives coming to him since his friends in town supposed him to be a hundred miles or more from this sequestered region, where he had followed in wake of the heiress. A sharp cut of Katrine's whip and the two sped foremost headed away, but hers sped foremost and he made no very strenuous efforts to be first at the goal. She held a dainty, snowy, perfume-missive, as he reached her side, and shot a searching, straightforward glance at him.

"I could have told you there would be none for me," he said, quite mistaking the import of the look. "Read yours by all means, Katrine; I know how important young ladies' letters are apt to be. Ah! can it be possible?"

His hand thrust into his pocket came forth empty, and a decidedly anxious shade was upon his face.

"I have certainly lost the one I meant to mail. Where?—I wonder."

"Hard to say, after all the paths we've traversed," returned Katrine, deliberately opening the white envelope and running her eye down the embossed page.

It was gone certainly, and Mr. Howe's disturbance prevented him observing the quick change which flashed over her face. She quieted her restive steed with one hand while she read the short missive quite through, then passed it to him.

"It was for you, and I was simply availing myself of the condition of our race. Comment is quite unnecessary. The note ran after this style:

"MY OWN DARLING!—Such joyful news I can't wait for your coming to tell you, though it seems wicked to rejoice since poor aunt Hughes is dead. But I am her heiress—think of that! No need of your staying out there in that horrid country working yourself to death to prepare a home for your bride that is to be so soon—now. Come back at once. Jack Jay has given me your address different from the one you wrote from, so I know that you are traveling and working at my agency instead of resting, as you led me to believe. No more of that now. And oh! how shall I count the days until you are with me."

"What a blessing that letter was lost," thought Mr. Howe, with a breath of relief, then winced and colored with the knowledge that Katrine's cool eyes were upon him.

"By all means hasten away to 'your Lulu's' side, Mr. Howe. I shall not remain disconsolate."

A flush was creeping into her cheeks, and Algernon suddenly comprehended as he saw Duke Norton, handsomely mounted, coming toward them.

"I'm convinced I can't do better than you advise," said he. "Let me wish you as much happiness as I shall have."

He would have ridden away then, but Norton's voice called him back.

sky was an unbroken sheet of gray, and that chilly East wind blew the leaves down in clouds from the dismantling forests. Miss Daly thumped at the piano unmercifully, watching the outdoor aspect, and quite unmindful of the agony her lover was enduring under the storm of discord her reckless touch called forth. He dropped his hands over hers at last, as they flew over the white keys, with a face of ludicrously pitiful appeal.

"Katrine, what is the matter with you this morning? I certainly never knew you to play so badly. Do have mercy on a soul to harmony attuned."

She wheeled about so suddenly as to almost take his breath.

"That's just it. 'A soul to harmony attuned,' and it has just come to me, in some inexplicable way, that you and I don't harmonize. I actually believe you'd rebel against me if you only dared. You always act under protest to any wish of mine—and I'm just unreasonable enough not to be satisfied with any thing except the blindest and most unquestioning devotion."

"And you have it from me. I am your slave, your worshiper, your devoted follower. I'm ready to swear fealty—to prove it any way you like."

"How glad I am." Certainly this Miss Daly was an odd creature, for she laughed outright as she sprang up from the music stool. "Then move it at once—order out the horses and I'll be ready in ten minutes."

Mr. Howe ventured upon a mild protest. "I thought you'd given that up, Katrine. It's cool for riding, and the road is slippery—"

"And you are determined to be disobliging. Very well, Mr. Howe, suit yourself. I thought proper to give you the first opportunity, although Duke Norton asked for the pleasure which you evidently consider a bore. I actually flibbed by telling him I was already engaged—true in one sense—but it's not too late to remedy that, I dare say."

Algernon took the alarm and roused himself with unwonted alacrity. Duke Norton would be only too happy to supplant him in more than this horseback ride, as he very well knew.

"I was thinking of your comfort, my dear. Of course I'm at your service entirely and willingly."

"Yes, 'at my service,' and that's all," said Miss Daly to herself as she buttoned on her habit. "I almost imagine I was a simpleton to quarrel with Duke because he said hard things of him. Dear Duke! He was honest to the core. But then Algernon is so handsome, and if he only wasn't so wretchedly submissive—just like a poodle-dog which licks the hand that slaps it. Why can't men have a particle of spirit, I'd like to know?"

Very contradictory, was it not, for Katrine to be finding objection to the very condition she so strenuously imposed? But the truth was she had been deluded into accepting Algernon after a certain lovers' quarrel arising from her unquestionable flirtation with him, in which Duke Norton had been an interested participant. And now her wayward heart was going back to its old allegiance; and had Mr. Howe but known what a straw might set all his calculations adrift, he would have hesitated before writing the long deferred letter to Lulu, which should break their engagement—the first entered upon, the longest in existence. Quite true he was writing it, as he did, hurriedly, while waiting for Katrine, for the day which should make him Lulu's husband had been set just one month hence, and in the six weeks' time since he parted from her, he had become the affianced wife of Katrine Daly. That much for mercenary promptings.

Not ready, Algernon? I thought it was the province of you gentlemen to be kept waiting."

"Quite ready, Katrine." He sealed the envelope and slipped it into his pocket as he spoke, answering her careless glance at it with all the haste of a guilty conscience. "A note to my tailor, my dear. These tradespeople are vexatiously importunate, and, contrary to my custom, I left a bill standing. We'll meet the postman if I am not amiss in my calculations."

To himself he was thinking, "She's inclined to be so deucedly exacting she might press awkward questions if she saw the address."

Katrine was in wild spirits during that ride, somber and gloomy as the day was. They were on their return when she espied the postman in the distance.

"A race, Algernon. Who reaches him first opens all the letters. Is it a bargain?"

He assented smilingly. He had no